



Introduction to The Poetry and Mystic Thought of Shah Abdul Lateef Bhittai

Agha Saleem



Culture Department, Government of Sindh

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**Introduction to The Poetry and Mystic Thought of
Shah Abdul Lateef Bhittai**

by
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Publisher's Note

Culture Department, Government of Sindh, remains in the lime light because of its peculiar nature of responsibilities including promotion of art and literature; protection of the heritage; establishment of libraries; etc. However, the aura, which the present management of Culture Department, under the leadership of dynamic and energetic Minister, Muhtarma Sassui Palijo, has created, is producing unparalleled results. The department, under the present regime (2008-12), has surpassed the milestones it had achieved either directly or through its subsidiaries, in last four decades (1967-2007). If we just analyze one responsibility of 'Promotion of literature' which includes printing and publishing of books, we can statistically justify our claim. While Culture Department published 135 books in last forty years, under the present regime (2008-12) the department has so far published over 190 quality books, including 39 books published on poetry and philosophy of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai.

2. There are no two opinions about the universality and genius of the poetry and thought of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai. He is undoubtedly one of the greatest poets of the World. Dr. H.T. Sorely, a British Scholar and intellectual, studied Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai with devotion and dedication. He compared Shah with twelve (12) leading lyrical poets of the world and ranked him number one. Similarly, Dr. Annemarie Schimmel, a German Scholar and lover of Shah Bhittai, analyzed and compared his philosophy and thought with that of Rumi. This research unveiled many new aspects and international character of Shah Abdul Latif's poetry and message.

3. Shah Latif is such a towering personality and his poetry is so impressive and thought provoking that it has been translated in many languages. Culture Department has the

the medium for the new growth.”¹ I have tried to delve in Shah’s poetry and let that ‘something’ happen and that something has happened in the form of this book.

It is said that the process of translation is not passive. Translator has his own creative impulse and his creativity plays its role in the process and as such his translation is faithful to the spirit, not to the letters of the original works.² But my process of translation of Shah’s poetry was passive as such it is a faithful translation of its spirit as well as its letter so that his message is communicated both in essence and form to those who do not know the original language of his poetry.

Agha Saleem

¹ An introduction to Literature-“Can Poetry be Translated?”

² Ibid

Life

Shah Abdul Lateef Bhittai, the great mystic poet of Sindh, was born at Hala Haveli, a village in Hala Taluka of Hyderabad District. It is at a distance of about 80 miles from Bhitt, the last resting place of Shah Lateef. As it often happens in the case of great men, the dates of birth and death of Shah are also controversial. Nevertheless a majority of notable scholars, after intensive research, has agreed that he was born in the year 1689 and passed away in 1752 at the age of 63.

Shah's ancestors came from Hirat (Afghanistan) with Tamerlane and settled in Sindh. His great grand father, Shah Abdul Karim of Bulri, was a renowned poet and a saint. His father, Sayyad Habib Shah, was also a pious man. Habib Shah was in Hala Haveli, when Shah Lateef was born, and after his birth, Shah Habib shifted to Kotri Kabeer, a place at a distance of about four miles from Bhitt and now in ruins. This is where Shah Lateef, in his prime youth, fell in love with the daughter of a powerful landlord, Mirza Mughal Beg. Shah Lateef wanted to marry her but Mughal Beg opposed the match and turned hostile to the family. Habib Shah had to leave Kotri and settle in a small village near Kotri.

Shah had found beauty of his dreams in human form and he was all the time so absorbed in its contemplation that he was oblivious of what was happening around him. His condition alarmed his father and one day finding him covered head to foot in sand he talked to him and recited an extemporaneous line of verse:

"The wind blew and covered all her limbs,"

To which Shah replied impromptu:

"The love smitten breaths just for seeing the beloved."

His father hoped that his son would come out of the infatuation but the rejection of his suit had shattered Shah completely and in a fit of despair and desperation he left home for destinations unknown. Coming across a group of wandering Hindu ascetic Jogis, he joined them in their foot journeys to Hinglaj, Junnagarh, Lahoot, Jassemere and Thar, the desert area of Sindh. He journeyed on the mountainous route, which the heroin of the popular folktale 'Sassui Punhoon,' had traveled in search of her beloved husband, Punhoon, who had left her after their marriage. During this journey Shah experienced all the hardships and sufferings Sassui had endured and the intensity of love that had driven her. At a later stage he composed five melodies of Sassui's love, her determination and her sufferings of separation and search. These wanderings broadened his vision and widened canvas of his poetry. Hence, we see the landscape of his poetry teeming with people from different walks of life: ironsmiths, striking anvil with their hammers and blowing up fire, lovers climbing gallows as a bridegroom climbs the bridal bed, moths, hovering over flames and burning themselves to ashes, drinkers, gulping venom mixed wine and hiccupping, archers, wounding lovers with darts of love, groaning love afflicted and physicians, Sufis, who do not believe in sectarianism and who guide even those who are their enemies, lover, riding a camel in full moon night yearning for union with the beloved whose face is brighter than the full moon, seafarers navigating sea of their being to find out new spiritual horizons, sea merchants preparing for new voyage and their youthful wives, imploring them not to leave them alone in the season of lovers' union. Killers of the beast in man, restless ascetic yogis, wandering in search of peace. Many folk, historical and semi-historical characters. Rivers, sea, mountains, lakes, desert, oasis, trees, jungle, cobras, swans, crows. Love-afflicted damsels, sending messages to their lovers through messenger crows and weaver girls. Over these images of animate and inanimate objects are painted human feelings of pain and pleasure.

After wandering for three years, Shah felt an inner urge to go to Thatta, where he met Makhdoom Mohammed Moen, the great Wahdatal Wujudi scholar and Sufi of the day. Under his influence, Shah became a Sufi, and on his advice he gave up aimless wanderings and returned to his parents. Meanwhile, situation at home had changed. Some robbers had ransacked Mughal Beg's house and killed all the male members of the family. The ladies, taking this incident as a curse fallen upon them because they had annoyed their Murshid, Habib Shah, came to him, sought his forgiveness and offered Mughal Beg's daughter, Bibi Sayyada, in marriage to Shah, he had fallen in love with. Thus Shah was united to the beauty of his dreams that he had seen in human form. But physical union was no longer a compelling urge. The company of Hindu ascetics and his sojourn at Thatta with the Sufi scholar had purged him and sublimated his love sickness into channels of Sufism and thus he had embarked upon a spiritual voyage. According to Sufi creed, the mundane beauty kindles flame of love and the pangs of separation intensify it and the lover reaches a stage where he yearns for the Eternal Beauty. The human beauty Shah had fallen in love with, was a veil of Eternal Beauty and the pangs he had suffered had purged him and he had perceived the Eternal Beauty through his crystallized self. This philosophy he expounded in all his poetry particularly in the melodies he wrote about Sassui.

The brutal murder of Shah Inayat, the great Sufi of his time, and the overall socio-political scenario of the country despaired Shah Lateef so much that he decided to retire in seclusion on a Bhitt (sand dune) and it is because of the Bhitt that he is called Shah Bhittae meaning Shah of the Sand Dune. It was on that dune that he composed his great poetry.

In the year 1752, he intuited his death. He asked his disciples to play music and sing the verses he had composed in raga Sohni. Wrapping himself in white sheet of cloth, he retired to Hujra (antechamber) and listened to music for three days, and when his disciples went in, they found him dead. He was buried at the Bhitt.

Historical Background

Except for its short lived annexation first to Iran and then to Delhi, Sindh had always been an independent country. Even during these periods of annexation Sindheans struggled against foreign occupation and as such the history of Sindh is the history of its battling for independence and its sons giving their lives for their motherland. Porus, the great unflinching hero of Indus Valley, fought with Alexander so valiantly that even Greek historians acknowledged his valour and valiance and acclaimed that no king, whosoever, fought Alexander with that valour throughout his conquests. But after his dignified surrender he accepted to act as satrap and commander of Alexander and fought with his own countrymen on behalf of his overlord, whereas in Sindh, Sambos and Oxycanos, the rulers of Sehwan and Alore, and the Brahman intellectual youths, not caring for their lives, fought Alexander and were massacred mercilessly.

Arabs conquered Sindh in 712 AD and ruled for about 300 years. Soomras, a local Rajput tribe, liberated Sindh and regained its freedom in 1011 AD. In 1333-34 AD, Sammas, another local tribe, started gaining power and eventually defeated Soomras and ascended the throne. By the year 1522 AD Samma rule degenerated and Arghoons and Tarkhans, the militant tribes from Central Asia, usurped Sindh's independence. Sindheans started guerilla war against them. Meanwhile, Akber, the Mughal emperor, conquered Sindh and annexed it to the empire. Sindh was divided into three administrative provinces of Bakhar, Sehwan, and Thatta and governors were appointed to rule on emperor's behalf. Aurangzeb died in 1707 and with his death the Mughal Empire started crumbling. It was difficult for the emperor to keep peace in Sindh. He, therefore, appointed Mian Yar Muhammad Kalhoro, head of the local tribe of Kalhoras, as governor of upper Sindh. The Kalhoras had acquired considerable following in upper Sindh in the garb of spiritualism and were striving for political power and after getting governorship they eventually succeeded in ascending the throne of Sindh. It was during Kalhora rule that Shah Lateef composed the poetry, great for all times to come. Kalhora period was a period of prosperity in

Sindh. Though they were embroiled in many battles throughout their reign and the armies of Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah trampled Sindh, but, despite all that, Kalhoras brought affluence and well-being to the people and Sindh flourished economically, culturally and intellectually.

But appraising the period by modern norms it was a period of intellectual dormancy, barrenness and a long cultural winter sleep. No new ideology was bred. The only progressive ideology was Tassawuf that too, with the passage of time, had lost its vigor and vitality. It was in this icy well that Shah Inayat put in appearance. He jolted the society with his declaration that all land belonged to God and its produce to the tiller. The custodians of status quo martyred him. Shah Lateef was 30 years of age then and the martyrdom of Shah Inayat left a permanent scar on his mind. Shah Inayat emerged in his poetry as a lover, who smilingly climbs the gallows as bridegroom climbs the nuptial bed. Probably one of the reasons of Shah's denouncing the world was Shah Inayat's brutal murder. Thus we see him denouncing the society and settling on a dune even after achieving his love object. It was from there that he assailed the social order of the time, criticized and condemned the static social order and revitalized Tassawuf with the vigor of his poetry. He exalted the common man and restored his human dignity the society had deprived him of. In my opinion no other poet, whosoever, has ever depicted the miseries of the downtrodden people as poignantly as Shah has done.

Shah Inayat

Sufis were against private property and gross accumulation of wealth and considered it to be the root cause of all social evils and human miseries. They quote many verses of Quran and traditions in support of it. For instance, they quote Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to have said: "All creatures of God are the family of God, and he is the best loved of God who loves best His creatures." According to another tradition, the Prophet said that on the Day of Judgment, God will admonish man, "O son of Adam! I was ailing and you never inquired after me, I was hungry and you did not offer me any food, I was thirsty and you

failed to provide with water." The puzzle man will submit: "O Lord! You are the Cherisher and the Sustainer of the worlds, how could all this be possible with you?" God will then say: "Was it not that such and such persons in your neighborhood were sick and suffered from hunger and thirst? Had you attended to them you would have felt my presence at no distance from them." Sufis set example and declassified themselves. They lived poor and desired to be raised poor on the Day of Judgment. Their khanqahs were the social asylums for the poor. There are many real and allegorical episodes in Sufi literature that reflect their concept of private property and amassing wealth. One of the allegorical episodes is that once a king brought two small bags of golden nuggets to famous saint, Hazrat Abdul Qadir Jeelani. He took one bag in his left and the other in his right hand and squeezed both the bags and, to the utter awe of the king, blood started oozing from the bags. Hazrat Jeelani rebuked the king: "Don't you feel ashamed of bringing to me the blood of the people you have sucked."

In modern times it is theorized that possession of property is not a biological but an acquired instinct in human being. Kropatkin, a well-known anarchist, hypothesized pre-historic society as without class and authority based on egalitarian social and economic relationship. Lewis H. Morgan, a nineteenth century social scientist supported the idea of primitive communism in ancient society. There were ancient societies, which existed without class and state and where collective right to basic resources was guaranteed. Engles working on Morgon's paper nalyzed its relationship to historical materialism in 'Origin of Family, Property and the State.' This hypothesis may not be true but it is certainly true that man has been wishing and dreaming of such a society ever since. For instance it was in the fourth century BC that Arisippus, a pupil of Socrates, held that pleasure is the highest goal in human life. This goal could only be achieved when man neither governs nor is governed, which means a society without government and state. Zeno, another philosopher of the period, dreamt of a community without government. Man should not be subject to the law of the state but to moral law. If man is allowed to be guided by his instincts

he would have no need for police, prisons, temples and army. During the Middle Ages, there were the Hussites, the Anabaptists, the Brothers and Sisters of the Free Spirit, all of whom repudiated the state and church institutions and private property. In the 17th century we meet Gerard Winstanely a clergyman who founded communal sect called the 'Diggers'. He identified Jesus as a universal liberty and regarded private property an evil. Yet another faction called the 'Levelers', who believed that of all the institutions that stood in the way of human equality the monarchy was the highest and most in need of leveling. Their agitation was in part responsible for the execution of King Charles I. Thomas More dreamt of a utopia of agrarian society, where there was no private property. All goods were deposited in a central warehouse from which each man could withdraw sufficient material for his needs. In 1755 Rousseau declared that all inequalities, except constitutional differences in men, are unnatural. He condemned land owning by individuals and said, "The fruits of the earth belong to us all and earth to nobody". The western society was fermenting for change, but here in Sindh the pathfinders of human progress were illuminating people's soul and asking people to do good deeds to get place in paradise. As people were not aware of their potentials to change their life style and the unjust and sinister system, they accepted all the miseries and sufferings with complacency. This was the social scenario when Shah Inayat Shaheed proclaimed, "Land belongs to God and its yield to the tiller." Hazrat Shah Inayat was Sufi of Surwardy order. It is said that his elders migrated from Baghdad and settled in Uch. This does not sound convincing because Langah, to which Shah Inayat belonged is a local Rajput clan. However, his family was follower of Suharwardia Makhdooms of Uch and his father came to Sindh as their representative. Shah Inayat was born in the year 1655-56. He received education in Tasawwuf from a renowned Sufi of Multan, Shams Shah who sent him to Hyderabad Deccan to acquire further knowledge from Mubarak Shah Abdul Malik. From there he came to Meeran Pur also known as Jhok Sharif. Within a short time of his stay in Jhok Sharif, he became popular as an ascetic Sufi. His popularity

touched the zenith when he distributed his family's land and the land granted by the rulers to Dargah, amongst the landless peasants without any compensation and share in the yield. Thus he became a threat to the neighboring landlord Sayyads, who, with the consent of the Mughal governor of Thatta, Mir Lutuf Ali, attacked Jhok Sharif and killed many of Shah Inayat's followers. Shah Inayat complained to the Mughal King Farrukh Sere at Delhi. The King forfeited all the lands of the Sayyads and gave it to Shah Inayat as compensation. The King also granted more land for the expenses and maintenance of the Dargah. This land was also distributed among the peasants. Shah Inayat had set an example of transforming feudal society into an agrarian egalitarian society in which collective well-being for all had become a reality. But it was not easy to change the settled static social order. The result was that the system retaliated with full force and pounced upon Shah Inayat. All custodians of the status quo united. The Mughal governor and the neighboring landlords complained to the King that Shah Inayat was organizing revolt against the King in the guise of spiritual movement. King ordered his governor, the zameendars and the Kalhora rulers of upper Sindh to crush the insurgency of Shah Inayat ruthlessly. Hence the governor of Thatta, Kalhora ruler, Pirs, Sayyads and landlords sent their forces to besiege the fort of Jhok. It might have been easy for government forces to topple the mud walls of the fort but it was very difficult to topple the wall of determination and conviction of the Faqirs of Shah Inayat. They started a guerilla war against the government forces and inflicted heavy losses on them. The siege continued for six months. Seeing the losses of invading forces and the resistance the Faqirs had put up, the governor decided to capture Shah Inayat by deceit. He sent a copy of the Holy Quran to Shah Inayat and invited him for dialogues according to the teachings of the Quran. Shah Inayat knew that it was a trap of treachery and deceit but to honour the Holy Quran he decided to surrender. He instructed all his Faqirs not to take up arms whatsoever may happen because the matter was with Allah. And then he went to meet the governor, who, as he had planned, immediately ordered the executioner to behead him. When he

was being beheaded he gave blessings to the executioner by reciting a verse:

*You are liberating me from the evil of existence
May God reward you for that in this and the next world."*

Shah Inayat was like a lone star which shined for a while, illuminated the path to progress, and then faded away. Darkness triumphed and spread over centuries.

Sufi Music and Dance

In Sufi terminology mystic music is called Sama, which means listening. But in Sufi orders Sama denotes listening to devotional music. Before the advent of Islam, Arabs used to organize musical concerts where erotic, obscene and profane love poetry was sung and beautiful slave girls served wine. This eventuated in over sexual indulgence. Male singers sang heroic epic poetry, which instigated listeners to revenge and resulted into orgies. Male singers sang heroic epic poetry, which aroused listeners to revenge leading to the sanguineous feuds among tribes. It was because of this reason that Islam disallowed all such music and poetry and permitted only that poetry which was useful for the society¹. Imam Ghazali said that Prophet was against only those "songs, which provoke sensuous desires and promote diabolic acts, but the music that intensifies the love of God in human hearts can by no means be equated with such songs".

In the days of Prophet (pbuh) Sama meant listening to Holy Quran. Prophet's companions, while listening to holy Quran, were moved to tears. Even Prophet himself wept when some verses of Quran were recited to him. It is reported that during prayers "sound like that of the boiling of a small cauldron was heard from his breast." An eminent follower, Ibne Jarir, is said to have died of ecstasy during the 'Sama' of the Quran.

Later in 9th century and onwards, Sama meant, listening of that music and poetry only, with or without musical instruments, which evoked spiritual ecstasy and purified

¹ fragrance of Sufiism-M.M Ali Qutbi

emotions. Thus Sama became a technical term used in a particular context and was distinguished from common musical concerts for its esoteric value. It is said that in Sama the connotations of poetic words, rhythm, and the modulation of song move the Sufi to spiritual rapture and he dances in spiritual ecstasy. This state of Sufi is called Wajd, which can be evoked even by mundane music². It is reported in Sufi literature that once some thieves organized a music concert. A Sufi happened to pass by and listened to it. It moved him to such spiritual rapture that the thieves, seeing him spiritually exhilarated, were extremely impressed. They gave up thieving and became pious men³. Sufi literature abounds in such anecdotes. However, there is lot of controversy about the permissibility of Sama among the Sufis. Many of them declare it unlawful while some consider it permissible and some adjudge it even as an act of worship. Ali Hajvery said: "Any one who says that he finds no pleasure in sounds and melodies and music, is either a liar and a hypocrite or not in his right senses and is outside the category of men of hearts.'

Abul Qasim Muhammed Aljunayd, an eminent Sufi has said "Sama is an occupation which admits one to the Court Hall of the Divine Audience." Once Ibne al Khair Abu Saeed, the notable Sufi of early eleventh century, was engrossed in Sama. When there sounded a call for prayer, he did not get up to offer prayer. When some one drew his attention to it he said, "I am already in prayers".

Some Sufis consider Sama a recollection of God's sound when He asked humans beings "Alastu Be Rabbekum" (Am I not your God?) And the humanity answered "Bala" (yes). The memory of the covenant is preserved in the human heart as a close secret, which is recollected during Sama. The voice of God was the first Sama for the ears of human beings. Shah elucidates this point in his melody of Marui:

*When the words of Allah-"Am I not your Lord?" fell on my ears,
I at once said heartily "yes" at that time,*

² ibid

³ Kashfal Mahjoob

It was then that I made covenant with the Beloved.

*

When there was no sound of "Kun Fayakun" (be and it became)

Neither there was any trace of moon (prior to creation),

Nor was there any awareness of virtue and vice,

And there was only Unity par excellence,

It was at that juncture, says Lateef, that

He unfolded the mystery (of creation),

O my Beloved! My eyes and soul have

The remembrance and awareness of that state.

Some Sufis, in the height of ecstasy, faint in Sama and it is believed that they faint on hearing the voice of Alast. Sama reminds them of Primordial Covenant. The sound of Alast was musical; as such some Sufis have identified even the musical mode in which it sounded. Hazrat Nizammudin Aulia has said that he heard the sound of Alast in Purbi raga, which he liked very much. Some of his disciples say that he heard it in Aeman raga because the Prophet had felt the breath of the Merciful coming from Yamen. Jalaluddin Rumi (1273) has said that the sound emanating from the musical instrument reminds the lovers of the first covenant and works as a clue to have access to the knowledge of Reality. He further says: - "Sound of human throat and that of tambourine both are in fact heavenly sounds."

Sufis have different views about the overwhelming effects of Sama on the listener. Sirri Saqti, the great Sufi of 9th century, said, "Sama makes lovers cheerful, fearful; and the desirous impassionate. It is like a shower of rain, which turns a very good soil into verdant" Ziauddin Suharwardi, a prominent Sufi has said, "Sama brings into motion what is already filled in the heart be it, joy, grief, fear, hope or devotion. At times it stimulates pleasure and at times it leads to lamentation. The effect of Sama, whatsoever, is called ecstasy and when it is exhibited in movements it is called Wajd." No one can define Wajd. It can only be experienced. Elaborating as to what Wajd is Ziauddin Suharwardi further says: The nature of ecstatic movements depends on the state (haal) of mind. If one is overwhelmed by

the feelings of grief, fear, anxiety, he starts weeping, crying and shouting; becomes restless and even faints then and there. On the other hand, if the listener is already occupied with feelings of happiness and good cheers, he claps and dances out of mirth and merriment". When harmony in the music and the inner feelings of listener is actualized, Sufi feels a kind of exhilaration, which becomes the aesthetic state. He is distracted from the physical world and becomes unconscious of his surroundings and is led to the super-sensory plane where, if hurt, he does not feel pain. This is a state of mind, which Sufis call Wajd.

While listening to Sufi music one transcends all the barriers of creed and breed. Hence in the Sama gatherings of Chishti Sufis "Bishan Pad" (hymns of Vishnu) were sung and Muslim listeners were absolutely enraptured by them.

Again there is difference of opinion among the Sufis about Wajd. Some say that in the state of Wajd one can dance because dance is the spontaneous expression of Wajd and manifestation of the ecstasy acquired in Sama. It is natural for a man to leap and dance when overwhelmed with joy. The point of difference is not the dance itself but the way of dance as to whether the dance should be organized and governed by set rules or it should be disorderly movements. The Sufis of Maulvia creed dance in an organized manner prescribed by their preceptor. While Hajveri differs and considers the dance based on prescribed rules as unlawful. He prefers to call it "movements" rather than dance. Some Sufis call it agitation (Izterab) and manifestation of agitation cannot be in an organized manner; it cannot necessarily be harmonious and rhythmic⁴. Though Sufis do not approve of methodological dance, they also do not appreciate disorderly and ridiculous movements of body. There are three types of Sufi dance; namely

1-Gashthani (encircling)

2-Dawidani (running)

3-Paidani (Stepping to and fro).

⁴ fragrance of Sufiism-M.M Ali Qutbi

Each denotes a particular spiritual activity. 'Gashtani' stands for journey round the world; Dawidani, leaping for upward ascension; and Paidani, stepping to and fro for trampling the sensuous desire⁵. A renowned poet of the Chistia order, Hazrat Usman Harooni, aptly describes this suprs-normal, transcendental state of Sufi, in one of his famous ghazals:

In the love of a friend I dance in the middle of fire for every moment,

Some times I flounce on dust,

And some times I dance on thorns.

Come, o barmaid, play mystic music;

In an ecstasy of union with the friend

I dance like a frenzied man.

I am Usman Harooni, a friend of Mansoor,

I am not afraid of ignominy and I dance on gallows.

Wajd is always momentary and Sufi's soul sinks back to the ordinary level of consciousness. If the state of Wajd continues, it can cause death. Hazrat Bahktiar Kaki, a well-known Sufi of Chistia order, died while listening to music because his soul did not sink back to normal consciousness.

Since ancient times scholars and musicologists have been endeavoring to find out as to how music affects human temperament. Hakim Zahir Farabi played three tunes on his violin in the audience of the Caliph. The effect of the first tune was that all present burst in uncontrollable laughter. The second tune made them lament and the third one set stupor over them. The Indian musicologists of yore analyzed impression, which each note makes on the listener and hypothesized that each musical note, in its own right, has emotive value. When it is sounded it evokes the particular human emotion. And then they tried to determine the emotive value of each note and of combination of notes. In the West also research has been made in

⁵ ibid

this regard and their findings are in accord with the views of Sufis. According to their findings music stimulates the forgotten and vague impressions stored up in the realm of the unconscious and makes the vague or imageless impressions clearer. This is a state when, according to Sufi belief, the listener recollects his covenant and this remembrance evokes ecstasy in him and he dances in mystic rapture. The ancient Indian musicologists also tried to find out basic human emotions, which, according to them, are:

- 1-Erotic (sringra)
- 2-Anger (roudra)
- 3-Comic (hasya)
- 4-Ridiculous (bibhatsa)
- 5- Heroic (vira)
- 6-Pathos (karuna)
- 7-Disgust (Jugupsa)
- 8-Wonder (vishmaya)
- 9-Peace (shanta)⁶

Every note or combination of notes evokes these emotions. Hence when Hazrat Nizamudin Aulia said that he heard the sound of Alast in raga Purbi, it was because the arrangement of Purbi raga's notes evoke feelings of love, pain, relationship, enthusiasm, humility, harmony, friendship, and pathos.

American psychologist Max Schoen, also conducted experimental study by using gramophone records and found that music produces change in the existing state of the listener. These changes he classified under nine heads as under:

- 1-Dreamy, tranquil, soothing, soft.
- 2- Sentimental, passionate, yearning, , melting.
- 3- Sad, pathetic, tragic, mournful.
- 4-Solemn, spiritual, grave.
- 5- Cheerful, gay, joyful.

⁶ story of Indian Music-Gosvami

- 6- Graceful.
- 7- Spirited, exciting, exhilarating.
- 8- Martial, majestic.
- 9- Sensational and thrilling.⁷

I have mentioned earlier that musicologists of yore attributed emotive value to each musical note and each note evokes some basic emotion of the listener and they determined the emotive value of each note and combination of notes. It appears that Shah was well aware of this attribution and he has compiled his poetic collection in the melodies, which harmonizes with the mood and feel of his poetry. For instance, the arrangement of notes of raga Khambhat is such that it evokes feelings of happiness and the poetry that Shah Lateef has compiled under the melody of Khambhat relates to the feelings of love and happiness.

Shah Lateef belonged to the class of Sufis who regard music as the source of spiritual exaltation and sublimity, and even at his deathbed he listened to his own poetry composed in raga Sohni. Shah was not only a lover of music but also a great musicologist. His virtuosity is evident from his poetic collection, which is compiled in various ragas. He appropriated and refined folk tunes that "come and go on the lips of the people," and included them in his system of ragas. His poetic collection consist of thirty ragas, some of which are classical ragas like Shudh Kalyan, Aeman, Khanbhat, Srirag, Abheri, Desi, Hussaini, Kaamode, Kedara, Sarang, Aasa, Bervo, Ramkali, Purbi, Pirbhati, Bilawal.

Some are indigenous ragas like Samoondi (melody of seafarers), Khahori (melody of seekers), Ghatoo (melody of killers). Kapaaiti (melody of spinning girls), Rip (melody of calamity of love) Karayal (melody of black colour), Dahar (melody of a valley between two dunes).

Some ragas are named after folk tales of love and valour. These are Moomal Raano, Marui, and Leela Chanaser, while

⁷ *ibid*

some titles of the folk tales are names of ragas also like Sohni and Sourath.

It is said that Shah also invented some ragas based on the occupational folk songs, seafarer's songs and songs of spinning girls. Unfortunately all songs of his invention are lost to the posterity and we are left with their names only. Shah was an innovative artist. He was the first Sufi in Sindh who introduced the musical instrument Danboor (variation of the word Tanboor) in Sufi Sama. Not only that but he also altered that traditional instrument, which previously had four strings and was called Chou Tara. He added one more string to it and made it Punj Taro Tanbooro. It reminds us of Zaryab, the great musician of his times. Zaryab was a Sindhi but the torrent of time hurled him to Arabia and from there to Spain. His influence on Spanish music was immense. He, about eight hundred years before Shah, added one additional string to the Arabian four stringed musical instruments Aoud, and made it five string.⁸

⁸ Dr. Nabi Bux Khan Baluch

Melody of Peace (*Sur Kalyan*)

Introduction

The poetic collection of Shah Abdul Lateef Bhattaee is called Risalo meaning the message. It is a 30 part magnum opus. Each part is named after a Sur (melody) of some classical raga, some folk tune, or a tune associated with some popular folk tale. The opening Sur is Kalyan. It is a Sanskrit word meaning well being, inner peace, tranquility, calmness, or harmony. The Sur begins with poet's description of the monistic concept of God by enunciating His various Attributes, particularly by His Oneness and Unity.

*Allah, the very first, the Omniscient,
The Supreme, the Lord of universe,
The Omnipotent is there since infinity by His
omnipotence, the uncreated,
The Lord, the One, the Unique, the Provider, the Master,
the Merciful,
Praise the true Master by singing hymn of wisdom,
The Generous One Himself sustains the universe.*

Having praised God Shah affirms the Prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh). He is the cause, the source; and the medium of creation. Sufis, particularly Mansoor and Ibn 'Arabi, believed that Muhammad (pbuh) was the Reality of the Reality, the Logos which is defined as a creative, animating and rational principle through whom God emerges from His Absoluteness and His

Unknowableness into manifestation. But the Logos is not Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) the man, who like every human being, was born and died but spirit of Muhammad (pbuh) of which Muhammad (pbuh) and all prophets, including Moses, Abraham and Jesus were individual manifestations. Hence Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) combined in himself spirit of Muhammad (pbuh) and Muhammad (pbuh) as man. Hence our poet calls him Karani, meaning the cause and medium of creation:

*Whosoever believed that God is one,
And heartily affirmed that Muhammad (pbuh)
Is the cause and source of creation,
None of such believer's boat
Ever touched unfavourable landing.*

After that Shah expounds his Sufi concept of God who, according to Ibn 'Arabi, is pure, without attributes and is essence of all existence. He is endowed with attributes when He manifests Himself either in the universe or in man (who is part of universe) and all created things are God's Attributes and are, therefore, identical with God. The relationship between Him and His creations is that of an object reflected in countless mirrors, which obviously cannot exist without Him. No doubt that there is multiplicity of Khalq (creation) but they do not have the reality in terms of their substance as opposed to essence. There is only one Reality that is Al-Haque (The Truth)¹ One is not the cause but essence of everything. In Vedanta philosophy it is Brahma. He is looked upon as the self and centre of the universe. There is only one self. Each one of us is that self, only it radiates like a sun or a star. So as the sun has innumerable rays, or just as you can focus the whole sun through a magnifying glass and concentrate it on one point. Likewise Brahma wears all faces that exist, and they are his masks. They are not only human faces but also animal faces, insect faces, vegetable faces, mineral faces; every thing is the supreme self.² For Hegel³ it is the Absolute in

¹ Ibn al Arabi-Ram Lamdau

² Allan Watts

which all opposites matter and mind, subject and object, good and evil-are resolved in unity and are one. In man the Absolute rises to self consciousness and becomes an Absolute Idea-that is thought realizing itself as part of the Absolute, transcending individual limitations and purposes and catching underneath the universal discord the hidden harmony of all things. He is the Absolute in which all opposites are resolved. For Shah the Al-Haqu and the Brahma is Pireen meaning the Beloved. Having expounded his monistic precept of God, our poet elucidates the mystic perception of God, the Pireen:

*Your manifestations are in billions,
Your essence is in every being,
But appearances are variant to one another,
O my Beloved, how can I enumerate
All of your innumerable attributes?*

*

*He is this, He is that, He is death,
He is the beloved, He is the breath
He is the enemy, He is the guide.*

*

*He perceives Himself and Himself is the beloved
He creates beauty and He Himself longs for it.*

*

*He Himself is the majesty, Himself the essence of beauty
Himself is the visage of beloved,
Himself paragon of beauty
Himself is the guide and disciple, Himself the idea of
Himself,
All this I learnt from within myself.*

Then we meet lovers whose agony of separation from the beloved is like that of a man who is on the gibbet. The malaise of

³ Story of Philosophy

beloved's separation is incurable and cannot be diagnosed by the worldly physicians, even an old hand is a blunderer:

O you stupid physician, why are you burning my skin with hot spikes?

*While my body is aching, you make me drink concoction,
Death is perceiving the beloved for those who consider
gallows a bridal-bed.*

Sufi's concept of love is that "it is a pleasure, and with God there is no pleasure: for the stations of reality are astonishment, surrender and bewilderment. The love of God for man is that he afflicts him, and so renders him improper for the love for any but Him...."⁴ For Shah it is the beloved who causes malaise and stirs the heart with pain. This pain is of different sort, which cannot be cured by any physician, but by the beloved alone. And because he inflicts pain he is called merciless but in fact he is the real guide and bliss of the soul:

*Having inflicted me, the beloved left,
My pains and pangs are all from him,
I now hate to hear of relief by physician.*

*

*The beloved became my physician, the guide to relief,
He uprooted my malaise completely and turned the illness
into health.*

*

*Different is the infliction of which beloved is the reliever,
No physician can relieve it,
Beloved is my guide, protector, and medication.*

*

*Beloved is medication not affliction,
Though known as Subduer he is sweet in company,
Whom he makes friend with, he repeatedly stabs him,
Lord, the cover, probes innermost of being.*

⁴ A.J. Arberry

Now we meet lovers who climb gallows as a bridegroom climbs the bridal bed. After the crucifixion of Christ and hanging of Hussain Bin Mansoor Hallaj on the cross and the gallows came to symbolize, in religious as well as secular literature, the persecution of the proclaimers of truth and the seekers of change, by the beneficiaries of falsehood and the custodians of status quo. In the Muslim mystic philosophy, however, the gallows stands for pain, suffering and torture unto death, which a true lover of God must endure in his journey towards union with the Divine. The gallows, or the beheading, is a frequently recurring expression in Sufi literature. It is also a venerated religious icon of Christianity. Later it elbowed in secular literature. It is too obvious an allusion to the last moments of two great mystics of the Muslim world, one an Arab and the other a Sindhi. It is said of Mansoor Hallaj that before he was hanged his hands were chopped off. Before the resultant loss of blood could turn him pale, he lifted his handleless arms and painted his face red in blood. Asked about the significance of his action, he replied that he did not want any one to think that fear of death had turned him pale but that he was aglow with crimson ecstasy at his imminent meeting with the Beloved. For Shah this is the real demeanor of lovers. The true lover is the one, who climbs gallows as onlookers marvel at the happiness that glows on his face while on gallows:

Why are they happy on gallows?

They take gallows as bridal bed

Since their eyes met with those of the beloved,

Mounting on bridal bed of gallows is the way of lovers,

They go forward and never look back.

*

Gallows is the adornment of lovers since

Before the advent of time,

To waver and step back is anathema for lovers,

They are, have always been, determined to die on gallows.

In Sufi thought love is also annihilation. Abu Abdullah al-Nibaji, the prominent Sufi, has said that: Love is a pleasure if it be for a creature and annihilation if it be for the creator. "By 'annihilation' he means, that no personal interest remains, that such love has no cause, and that the lover does not persist through any cause."⁵ Shah's perception of love is the same. The lover has to annihilate his ego and his self, and it is only then that he can be aware of the real Self. And in fact this awareness is the real union with the Beloved and this can be achieved through pain and suffering because for Shah the pain and suffering cause cathartic effect on human soul and one can see through his so crystallized self the real Self. To bring home this perception of love, Shah draws images like dagger, dart, gallows, chopping of limbs by the butcher, etc from the concrete world and applies them to human being's inner world of pain, suffering and agony.

*First stab yourself then talk of love,
Let agony of separation should vibrate in your being like
wind in a trumpet,
Roast your flesh on pikes if you talk of love.*

*

*Having learnt the way of lovers do not moan
When knife is pierced in you,
The agony of love should not be shared with others,
Keep the agony unto you with ecstasy.*

*

*I am in love with those who wield knife,
I should go gallantly to the arena of love,
And should rest my head on the chopping block,
So that the beloved may behead me.*

The beloved calls the lover to kill him and after killing him again calls him. This is also symbolic. By killing the poet means

⁵ ibid

the annihilation of ego and thus the lover is transformed and reincarnated:

The beloved beckons and slaughters; he slaughters and then beckons,

Don't step aside when you are under the spear of love,

O you lover, cast aside your knowledge and wisdom,

Go straight to face death.

*

One who kills takes care also and beckons along love to be near him,

This is the way of beloved for all times,

He is the healer, who opens the wounds,

And is delight of the soul.

Another eminent Sufi Sahl has said, "Whoso loves God, is life: but whoso loves other than God has no life. By the words "is life" he means his life is agreeable because the lover delights in whatever comes to him from the beloved, whether it be loathsome or desirable: while by "he has no life," he means that as he is ever seeking to reach what he loves and ever fearing that he might be prevented from attaining it, his whole life is lost. And Shah says:

Every thing whatsoever comes from the beloved is sweet,

If you taste heartily there is no bitterness of any sort.

The poem moves on replacing gallows and daggers with killer-wine as symbolic means for God lovers to merge with the Divine:

The front liners are near the chopping block,

And the rear ones are ready for being beheaded,

Severe your head so that you may be accepted,

No lesser offering would be acceptable,

Don't you see heads of those slain in love, scattered all over the ground?

*The gruesome game of beheading is going on in the tavern
of barmaid.*

*

*Lovers who are in habit of drinking poison
Are jubilant at the sight of the poison,
They are habitual of drinking bitter and deadly wine,
They are in love, says Lateef, and separation has
Annihilated them
Even when their wounds torment them, they never let on to
any one.*

Since ancient times wine is the favorite metaphor of physical as well as spiritual pleasure. Greek gods used to drink nectar on Olympus Mountain, and Hindu gods and saints took Som Rus. God Shiva, in his attribute of Mahesar, (Maha-Eshwer meaning great god), is god of wine also. Dionysus is the Greek god of wine and vegetation. He is not only the god of pleasure of wine but is said to be the god of human nature. 'Every one of us carries inside him the "Dionysus cord," which make the gifts of Prometheus useless.' 'He reminds men to forget the insignificance of their existence. He is a voluptuous, ecstatic power that produces pleasure and forgetfulness, and forgetfulness is considered bliss. Men forget for a while that life is short, youth is fleeting and death is the eventual end of life. Awareness of the brevity of life has given birth to two types of poetic attitudes: One of composing didactic poetry instructing thereby the reader to do good deeds as life is very short; and the other is of enjoying life voluptuously. Past is dead and has vanished forever; future is continuation of the present. Only the now and the is-ness is eternal and everlasting. Hence one should live in the present, the current moment; the now. One is called Apollonian and the other Dionysian poetry. The best example of Dionysian poetry is that of a renowned Persian poet, Omer Khayyam. In his poetry we feel an ever-looming presence of death and the resultant intense feeling of forgetting brevity of youth and life. Wine, the gift of Dionysus to mankind for forgetfulness, makes us forget and enjoy every fleeting moment:

*Today is the time of my youth,
I drink because it is my solace,
Do not blame me, although bitter it is pleasant,
It is bitter because it is my life.*

In the sixteenth century English literature there was a popular literary tradition known as *Carpe diem*, which means 'seize the day'. One poem, written in this tradition by a sixteenth century poet Robert Herrick, is still very popular:

*Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old time is still a-flying,
And this same flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying.*

*Then be not coy, but use your time;
And while you may, go marry;
For, having lost but once your prime,
You may forever tarry.*

In mystic poetry wine is a symbol of joy, ecstasy; and rapturous love of God. To communicate this spiritual ecstasy and joy, Sufis have used similes and metaphors from daily life of common men so that they could visualize and feel the abstract spiritual pleasure the Sufi experiences by comparing it with mundane joys of every day life. In many ancient religions wine was considered synonymous with truth because one who drinks cannot hide truth. It was also regarded as a divine beverage. It has the effect of submerging the normal personality of the person who drinks it. The followers of Dionysus, when drunk, lost their individual personality, were mad, crazed and taken over by their god. The actors in the plays performed for Dionysus rite were masked; the mask symbolized the submersion of their identity into that of another. It is because of this quality of wine that Sufis have used it as a symbol of obtaining spiritual ecstasy and losing individual personality. We all know that Omer Khayyam was a poet of pleasure and wine.

In Western world he was considered as an erotic pagan poet, but later he was adjudged as a Sufi poet. J.B.Nicolas, who translated Omer Khayam's Rubaiyat in French in the year 1867, presented him as a mystic poet like Hafiz Sheerazi, 'shadowing the Deity under the figure of wine, wine-bearer; etc'.

Shah has also used wine as a mystic metaphor for merging one's individual identity with the ultimate Reality. If we go by the explicit meaning of Shah's verses pertaining to wine, it will appear that the poet is motivating people to drink wine, to go to wine-maid and offer their head for a tumbler of wine. But its implicit meaning is that the wine-maid and the wine, both, obliterate ego and the drinkers become one with the whole. Hence we see drinkers crowding the tavern, their individuality under liquidation. The poet advises drinkers to go to the tavern and lay their heads beside the pitcher of wine and get a sip from it. The wine-maid will torment them first, tear them into pieces and then give them wine. The drinkers are clamoring for wine of god Shiva which is not an ordinary wine but there is some mystery in it for it squeezes life from the sinews:

*If you yearn for a sip of wine, go to winery,
Lateef says, lay down your head beside the wineful pitcher,
Then gulp mouthfuls of the thick wine, o bridegroom,
That overpowers even the powerful,
A sip of such wine even for the price of head
Would be a cheap bargain.*

*

*If you long for a sip of wine, go to the winery,
Lateef says: lay down your head near the wine pitcher,
Give your head in price and drink cupfuls.*

*

*If you yearn for a sip of wine, go to winer's lane,
There is always a clamor for the wine of god Shiva,
When I learnt the mystery of wine I realized that it was
worth one's head.*

*

If you have no taste for bitterness, do not wish for wine,

*Because it squeezes life from the sinews,
Lateef says, you may taste wine after you have chopped
your head.*

Beheading, killing and chopping symbolize annihilation of the wine-seeker's ego and individual identity. The imagery of drinkers and the beautiful wine-maid is taken from the folk tale "*Moliki aun Mataara*." Mokhi is a Sindhi variation of the Persian word Moghi derived from Mughan, a Zoroastrian priest who used to serve ceremonial wine on feasts and festivals hence Peer-e Mughan in Persian poetry.

The Tale

A maiden, Mokhi by name, had a winery in a village called Kaunkar some where near Karachi. Famous for its high quality and strong wine, the winery was frequented by connoisseurs from all around. Among them were eight friends, young and strong, known as Mataaras, who, though infrequent visitors were the hardest to please. Mokhi had to provide them strong and still stronger stuff every time. One day they came and demanded wine of the same vintage. They were served all the varieties available in the winery, but none took them high. They demanded stronger wine, which could take them out of themselves. Mokhi, remembering a pitcher of wine buried in a corner of the winery since long, had it recovered and served its brimful contents to the Mattaras. The Mattaras emptied the pitcher and went away staggering.

They returned after a year and were served all the varieties available in the winery but none was equal to the one they had drunk year before. They clamored for the same stuff so that the high level of blissful tranquility they had attained on their earlier visit could be recaptured. Mokhi was baffled for the wine she had offered them last year was from a pitcher in which a cobra had perchance fallen, its flesh had dissolved in the wine and only its bones had remained. The venom had fermented with the wine and had given it an strange new taste and effect. Mattaras had drunk that deadly wine and now no wine was having any

effect on them. Mokhi did not want them to know that they had drunk venom mixed wine, but she, finding them desperate for that wine, had to tell them the truth. Mattaras were strong and brave but they were fragile like a pitcher made of unbaked clay. They had not trodden the path of fondness and longing, which leads to gallows; nor were they lovers who embrace death with a smile. They had drunk only wine but had not known the taste of venom. They had not reached the state where venom is the real wine for lovers. When they learnt that the year before they had drunk cobra venom, they were so shocked that they died instantly.

*What killed them was not wine,
But the words of reproach of the wine-maid that
touched their heart and they died.*

*

*The wine-maid had nothing against them nor wine killed
them,
Sayyad says, they crowded the tavern for a sip of wine,
Behold the graves near the brewery of those who were
chilled to death by words.*

Musical Interpretation

Kalyan is a Sanskrit word meaning peace of mind and tranquility .Traditionally it is a devotional raga and mostly hymns are sung in this raga. As regards its origin, it is associated with Kalyani, a city which was once under the empire of Nizam of Hyderabad and is a part of Andhra Pradesh It is said that Kalyan raga was invented during the reign of Somaswara, the son of Vikremaditya. He was an authority on the art of music. He wrote a book on music in Sanskrit language with a title “ Manasolasa” .Kalyan is the name of a That(Frame) also .We know that ragas are related to human passions and emotions The very word raga means coloring or passions. The ancient musicologists of this sub-continent analyzed impression of each note and micro note it makes on the listener and thus determined their emotive value and equated each note and micro note with a particular human emotion. The point which

needs elaboration is that every raga contains at least five notes and many micro notes and every note and micro note has a different emotive value thus every raga, at one time ,would evoke many emotions. Mr. Gosvami ,the renowned Indian musicologist has elaborated the point .According to him each raga always gives prominence to one or two notes .This emphasis on a particular note or notes is thus continued through out the raga, maintaining its swing and over powering effect by the subordination of other notes. Hence the emotional appeal of vadi and samvadi notes of the individual raga helps to determine the emotional value inherent in a raga .

The ascending and descending notes of raga Kalyan are;

SA-RE-GA- MA- PA- DHA – NI –SA

SA- NI –DHA- PA –MA- GA- RE –SA

With Vadi note GA and Samvadi note DHA

Shah Lateef probably knew the emotive value of each raga and thus the mood and feel of the verses given under Sur Kalyan synchronies with the emotive value of the raga.

Melody of Harmony (*Sur Aeman*)

Introduction

This long poem is; so to speak, a continuum of the poem *Sur Kalyaan* portraying varied human emotions, poet's spirituality, his mystic creed and his perception of human relations and humane social behavior. All this he puts across through symbols drawn from both animate and inanimate worlds. The nineteenth century famous French symbolic poet Mallarme, explained symbolism as the art of evoking an object 'little by little so as to reveal a mood' or conversely 'the art of choosing an object and extract from it an *etat d'mae*'. This mood was to be extracted by a series of deciphering.' His follower in symbolic poetry, Henry Regnier, defined symbol as a kind of comparison between the abstract and the concrete in which one of the terms of the comparison is only suggested. Thus it is implicit, oblique; and not spelt out.¹ Long before the advent of symbolist movement in French poetry, there was a clear concept of symbolism in poetry and it was said that every poem has four levels of meaning. Dante, while introducing the matter of the *Divina Commedia*, explained the four levels of meaning, which are, the literal or historical meaning, the moral meaning, the allegorical meaning, and the anagogical meaning(*ibid*). Likewise the objects chosen by Shah as symbols like wine, gallows, physicians, blacksmiths, anvil, darts, bows, Prophet David, Cain, etc.- are simplified representations of something more and that something is to be deciphered by the reader.

¹ Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Concept- J.A.Code

The poem opens with groans and moans of patients of love beseeching their beloved, their real physician, to cure them. Sweet words of beloved heals the aching heart of lover as he is the cause as well as the cure of lover's all afflictions:

*You are the beloved, the healer, the potion for pain,
O beloved! I suffer from varied maladies,
Cure the patients of their afflictions O Lord!*

*

*You are the beloved, the physician; and the remedy of
pain,
Curative are your sweet words for my aching heart,
I crave for you as other physicians' medicines don't work.*

*

*You are the beloved, the physician, and the medicine
For those who are down with affliction,
You cause the sickness, you cure it, and you are, the guide
and the Lord benevolent,
Strange that you make the worldly physicians ineffective.*

There are variegated images of the beloved. He is the cause of malady and its cure, an archer, a cruel horseman, the murderer Kabeel (Adam's son Cain), a beautiful damsel running a tavern and serving wine mixed with venom to the drinkers, an ironsmith and a physician. In all personas he is a biological reality but in fact, in every persona he emblemizes a different character. As an archer he shoots arrows of love, wounds the lovers and they groan for union. As a murderer and cruel horseman he kills the lovers symbolically, that is to say he effaces their ego and obliterates their self; and as a wine maid she serves them wine of love and thus arouses yearning for the beloved. The beloved administers medicine but patients can be cured more by abstinence prescribed by the beloved physician rather than by medicines. In Sufi vocabulary abstinence has a different connotation. It is defined as restraining appetite, being generous, and doing good deeds.

The poem Aemon is basically a love poem and Shah uses collective symbol of moth for a lover and we see moths hovering over flame and deliberately throwing themselves in it to burn

themselves up. They are the real lovers and those who claim to be lovers should learn from the moths the way of love. Burning oneself in the flame of love is the only way to be one with the beloved. Here also burning into ashes alludes to burning of ego. If one claims to be in love, he should come forward like a moth and extinguish the fire that has burnt many moths. The real lover should burn the fire and be one with the fire, and let no one know about it. The blaze is the blaze of Truth:

*If you claim to be a moth, come and extinguish fire,
This fire has burnt many; you burn out the fire itself,
Be aware of the reality of the fire, let no commoner know
about it.*

*

*If you claim to be a moth, throw yourself willfully in
flame,
Drive on to flame till it is put out,
It will surely go out, let no commoner know about it.*

*

*If you claim to be a moth, don't retreat seeing the blaze
Enter into beloved's radiance and be a bridegroom,
You are still unbaked and not familiar with oven.*

*

*The moths rushed and gathered over the blaze,
Approaching it they burnt themselves over the truth,
The unfortunates lost their necks.*

Seeing the beloved is by itself a prayer, a ritual. Why go for Chilla (forty days seclusion) for one's body is the real antechamber of ascetic meditation and human heart, the real place of worship. If one searches his self, he will perceive the imperceptible every time:

*The forty days seclusion for mystic communion with God
And its recurrence again and again,
Are not equal to beloved's glimpse,
O scribe! Why you write pages after pages,
Turn twenty pages and you will find only one word.*

*

Don't go for forty days seclusion,

*Your body is itself a chamber of ascetic meditation,
And your heart a place of worship,
Why don't you worship the Imperceptible One all the
time,
You search Him and you will see Him in front of every
one.*

As the poem progresses we meet ironsmiths who light up fire and blow it to make it burn brighter. The fire of love is ablaze in their shops and we hear the rhythmic sounds of hammer striking on anvil. They are making steel of cast iron and removing rust with fire and hammer. If one claims to be a lover, he should make his head the anvil and ask for the ironsmiths to make pure steel out of cast iron:

*Making your head an anvil look for smiths,
They might hammer you to pure steel.*

*

*Today the veracious smiths have come with whetstones,
They will sharpen the swords by watering them.*

*

*The veracious smiths have come today,
They will remove all rust and bring out the steel.*

*

*Rust melts, iron liquefies, blaze burns bright,
Hammers strike and anvils tremble,
Smiths have gathered at blaze today also.*

Then Shah elucidates his view about the true Sufi. According to him the true Sufi never believes in sectarianism. His concept of religion is universal. Sufis' creed is love and their God is love. God of religion manifests Himself in man as both virtue and sin, but Sufi's God manifests Himself beyond virtue and sin. He is God of all human beings, irrespective of their religious faith. According to Ibnul Arabi, God is love and when human beings love Him they love the love. He believes that every one worships God according to his own religious belief. Practicing particular faith does not mean that one should consider other religions as false. Referring to the verse of the

Quran that "Wherever you turn, there is the face of God", he suggests that perception of God should not be confined to one's own form of belief only. And in support of his view he quotes the saying of Hazrat Junaid: "The colour of the water is the colour of the vessel containing it". At some other place he quotes words of God "I manifest myself to him in the forms of his belief only." In one of his verses he expounds his universal religious faith:

*My heart is capable of every form,
A cloister for the monks, a fane for idols,
A pasture for gazelles, the votary's Kabah,
The tables of Torah, the Koran,
Love is the faith I hold, Wherever turn His camels, still
the one true faith is mine.²*

Sufi respects all religions and keeps his own to himself. He is at war with his self (nafs) and never lets any one know of it. He is a friend of even those, who are his enemies. Sufi washes the "parchment of being" and enables others to perceive the Beloved. It is not the way of Sufi to adhere to desires. Sufi is one who does not abandon desire because abandoning desire is also a desire. Sufi is that whom desire abandons:

*Giving hurts them; not giving makes them happy,
True Sufis takes nullity with them.*

*

*Sufi has no sect, and no one knows his creed,
Within himself he is at war with himself, but never lets
on,
He is pathfinder even for those, who nourish malice
against him.*

*

*Sufi washed the parchment of my being.
It was only then that beloved's vision was seen in life.*

*

*Claiming to be Sufi and nourishing desires is not the Sufi way,
Take off your turban of pride and throw it into fire.*

² Rom Landau

Sufis believe that human soul is born with innate knowledge but forgets it during his association with body. Thus any newly acquired knowledge is in fact old knowledge suddenly remembered by the soul. So he says:

*I forgot the lesson, and don't remember even its first line,
Alas! I have not been able to read the first page as yet.*

*

*When I read the page that tells of beloved's union,
I found nothing but you everywhere.*

*

*When I read the earliest lesson,
The first thing I recognized was the original abode of my
soul,
Where souls have daily experience of knowing God, Page
turned and there was a separation.*

*

*I forgot the lesson, even its first line I don't remember,
The pity is that I have not been able to read the first page.*

When human soul realizes that there is no duality of man and God then there is no separation. Separation is in fact the unawareness of an individual of original oneness. Union with God is effected with awareness that before coming into concrete material being the individual had existed in God.

We also meet Malamatia Sufis who outwardly behave in a manner that people take them for sinners but in fact they are pious saints. For them performing pious and virtuous acts in public is ostentation and exhibitionism, a kind of associationism (shirk) by means of which their spiritual sublimity is exhibited. A true devotee performs virtuous deeds for virtue's sake, heedless of any recognition. He treats praise and condemnation alike, never aims at receiving awards in worldly life and life after death. They perform good deeds exclusively for their beloved's pleasure. They deliberately do such deeds so that they draw people's blame on themselves and keep their virtues hidden from them. Thus they lead double life. Outwardly involved in

mundane deeds but inwardly absorbed in remembrance of their beloved.³

*Debauches though they appear outwardly, they are
annihilated in deep meditation,
The arrow of divine instructions is struck in their hearts,
They recite the True Name in their hearts.*

All Sufis, irrespective of the order they belong to, consider it Shirk and our poet also time and again advises the lover not to let any one know about their love because it amounts to ostentation and exhibitionism. Hence he says:

*O mother! I don't trust them, who shed tears,
Their tears are ostentatious, they weep to show off,
Those, who remember the beloved, neither weep nor
complain.*

Shah calls Rumi his spiritual guide and tells us that according to his guide God is fountain head of beauty whose seekers and lovers are innumerable.

*Seekers are numerous, the fountainhead of beauty is one,
This is Rumi's discourse,
If you break open the door of separation
You will perceive him inside yourself.*

*

*Seekers are numerous and the fountainhead of beauty is
one,
This Rumi believes,
Those who saw the place (where they could perceive the
Beauty)
Kept mum.*

*

*Seekers are numerous and the fountainhead of beauty is
one,
This Rumi has said,*

³ fragrance of Sufism-M.M Ali Qutbi

Unlock your inner self and you will perceive him in yourself.

*

*Seekers are numerous and the fountainhead of beauty is one,
This is what Rumi talks about,
First is the self-annihilation, only then beloved is attainable.*

Then we meet drinkers crowding the tavern. They have come to barter their head for a sip of wine. They are intoxicated to the extent that they hiccup, stagger and totter. In Sindhi mystic tradition the lovers drink wine mixed with venom that kills their ego. Hence our poet asks the drinkers to give their head for a sip of the wine:

*They hiccup but still drink cupfuls of venom mixed with wine,
Rise o wine-maid, give more to the lovers,
Sips satiate them not, they are looking for pitchers.*

*

*Dagger on neck and wine tumbler on lips, this is their wont,
Grabbing the wine they take mouthfuls with full heart,
Wine is aplenty for those who achieve ecstasy*

*

*Give your head somehow square up with the wine maid,
Cut it with dagger, knife or saw,
Don't fear death, cup of wine is more precious than your head.
Don't evade death, cup of wine is precious,*

*

*Every tumbler, every pitcher contains wine of different variety,
Tasting the varieties value of the winer was realized, They
come straight to the tavern offering their heads,
Sayyad says they gladly surrender their heads.*

Then the poet tells us as to who the real lovers are, what are their characteristics, and those who do not possess these characteristics are not lovers but imposters.

*Lovers are never with sound health as you are,
They regularly go to beloved's door and shed tears,
Having accepted one beloved they never care for other.*

*

*Anyone with blood in his veins should not claim to be a
lover,
Pale face, loss of beauty and constant longing are lover's
attributes,
Though destitute, he barter's head in love's transaction.*

*

*You bleed when thorn pricks you
How would you bear the wounds the beloved would
inflict direct in your face.
Why do you make empty claims of longing and love?*

The poem also contains didactic verses. Our poet, assuming the role of a moralist, sets out to instruct, he puts forth his moral idealism which is surely difficult to practice in a society where social Darwinism of survival of the fittest is being religiously practiced. He teaches us to be humble, meek, kind, courteous, and patient. The word patient is used with different connotation in Sufi literature. A Sufi has said: "Patience means being patient with patience". This signifies that one should not look for any consolation therein, and be forbearing, tolerant and ever make our hearts soft like wax:

*If any one talks harshly don't answer back,
Lateef says, melt your heart like a wax when dealing with
people,
Tolerance is rewarded, malice gains nothing.*

*

*Hearing harsh words don't answer back,
This guideline of the Guide is like a necklace,
Those who have annihilated ego are embellished all over.*

*

*Respond not to what others say,
Reason with your anger every day,
Don't retort and you will be greeted at every door.*

*

Chide not who do not chide you, forget whatever is said to you,

*Be humble and show humility all the time,
Bow your head on your knees, and lead a humble life,
A judge in your heart would ever avert a wrong judgment.*

*

*Those whose company ends your sufferings,
O my self, build your hut near their abode,*

This moral idealism has, however, softened his people to the extent that there is a threat of their becoming virtually extinct and annihilated as a cultural and linguistic entity.

Musical interpretation.

Aeman is a sampooran (complete) raga using all the seven notes of the octave in ascending and descending lines. It is ascribed to Kalyan That. The literal meaning of the word Aeman is "that which prohibits" and also that which is on the left side." The country of Yemen is so named because it is situated on the left side of Hijaz. In the East Asian countries seven-note Bansary (flute) is called Aemini in which we find traces of our seven notes scale. For some scholars Aeman is not a shudh (pure) raga but a mishermel (mixed) raga. The first mention of this raga we find in Pundit Lochan's book 'Raga Tiragni'⁴ where it is one of the main ragas and of which many rasgas are derived. Almost all the musicologists attribute its invention to Ameer Khusro. According to the Indian tradition all such ragas which were either introduced or invented by non-Aryans were called Savaraprada meaning tunes given by the foreigners. Hence it is a Savaprada raga. Its ascending and descending notes are;⁵

SA - RE - GA - MA - PA- DHA- NI -SA

SA - NI- DHA -PA -MA - GA - RE- SA

Its vadi and samvadi notes are GA and NI. It evokes warmth as well as enthusiasm.

⁴ Rasheed Malik

⁵ story of Indian Music

Melody of Voyage (*Sur Srirag*)

The setting of the poem is sea and seashore swarming with ships, vessels, galleys and boats. Some vessels are weighing anchors, some have already anchored. Some boats are furling sails and some are unfurling. Cargo is being loaded and unloaded and beyond the shore is stretched the fearful sea with ever-rising water and white foaming waves, surging against the stream. Big ships, loaded with jewels, cloves, silk, cardamoms, precious stones and pearls, are floating and furious waves are surging against them. The waves are so violent and current, so swift that anchors cannot stay and even big ships cannot stand stationary. Shore abounds with eddies. There are whirlpools even at the shore and water whirls as curd in a churn:

*Current is swift, tide is ever rising, and anchors can not
stay,
Even big ships sail against the current with full force,
The seafarers use ballast to steady their boats on the sea,
I have heard pilots telling hair-raising tales.*

The sea is wild, chaotic, 'dark, heaving, boundless' and endless, an image of eternity.' Its vastness and immensity, emptiness right up to the horizon, roaring and terrifying solitude, evoke religious awe and awareness of the mysteries and dynamic forces of nature. One feels extremely helpless and awfully insecure. The sea is rich in implications. It is a symbol of life and death, the trials and tribulations of this world and the beyond. The poem can be interpreted as an exteriorization of the inward spiritual voyage for salvation and the temptations,

which assail the voyager on his voyage through life to death. Every one is summoned by death and he finds that he can take nothing with him but his deeds. Eddies, currents and waves attacking the boat in the sea with full force, are temptations and forces of evil deployed against man in his spiritual pilgrimage.¹

Kant has said that moral dignity of man is that his mind transcends the thoughts of danger. Shah, having instilled fear of the unknown in the mind of reader, transforms that fear into morality. Shah lived in a period when cultural system, concepts, evaluation and religious fervor were strong and society was well integrated. People led a collective life and poet's role was didactic, reformist, egalitarian and iconoclastic. Poetry besides being expression of human feelings, ideals, perceptions and worldview of the poet, also provided guidance for good life and simple life. It was assumed that all poetry instructs as well as delights. Hence the literature of The Middle Ages abounds with proverbs, didactic and gnomic poetry. This poem is also didactic and religious in its thrust. Shah tells the reader that world is a terrible sea and life is a voyage through the sea. One can cross it only with the help of God and with complete and unconditional submission to Him:

*Turbulent waves, tides, infinite stretch of whiteness,
inundation, and an endless water,
There o God, do not maroon the boats of seafarers on
some desolate island,
The ship may remain undamaged, and the bottom board
unbroken,
Let no harm come to the boats of the poor mariners.*

*

*My boat is on your mercy, and commodity therein is of
your union,
It is you, who has equipped it with masts and oars,
There is no need of guide when you conduct it to landing.
The other shore of the sea is calling.
No one will go with us except our deeds,*

*

¹ Byron

Sufi, inspite of all his zeal and zest and worship, prayers, ardent adherence to theistic canons, and good deeds, considers himself to be a sinful person. He genuinely feels that he is not following the religious injunctions in letter and spirit. As such he is a sinner, he has deliberately or unconsciously broken the pledges he made with Allah. And a man with such a sense of sin expresses his state of mind in sea-traders' lingo and idiom and repents that he has traded in lead and not gold. He has filled his ship with cargo of fakes and not with pearls:

*Fakes have been my only barter, never pearls,
Sayyad says, I have always dealt in lead,
With these in my account, your grace is my only hope.*

*

*Fakes have been my only barter, all pledges with Allah I
have broken,
I am immersed in sins from head to toe,
O Imperceptible, you know very well it all.
Then Shah advises the sea merchant to:
Stop trading in fakes, remember God,
Cleanse your mind of all perfidy, as God loves truth,
Kindle a pearl, a blaze of love in your heart,
Doing so may prove to be of gain to you.*

*

*Delve deep and find boat of submission in yourself,
Equip it with sails of obedience and sincerity,
Fill it with cargo of entreats,
So that it may not stray before the port of Eden.*

It is not only the midstream that is dreadful but even the harbor is horrendous. The tide is high at the harbor and the current is eddying like a curd in a churn. As such:

*O helmsmen, sleep not when there is a danger at the
harbor,
The current is eddying like curd in a churn,
One should not sleep, after bearing so much pain.*

But despite the horrible current and hazardous and precarious harbor the sailors are not worried because they rely on the Guide:

*Relying on the guide, they all slept peacefully,
You also sleep o sailors, the coast is not in turmoil,
They all will pass through the rock barriers who are the
Sayyad's concern*

*

*Tide never overwhelms those who worship the
Praiseworthy,
They sailed through the tempest with help of repentance,
Depending on God they easily braved the turbulent
current,
The master mariner came to their rescue in midstream.*

For crossing the sea safely the seafarer must maintain his boat and keep it in perfect order. He should regularly stitch, sew, mend and wash the sails and oil the boat.

*Plug the holes and oil your boat regularly,
Sayyad says, sail your boat on the current with care and
vigilance,
Equip your boat with thick ropes twined afresh,
Then drive it to the sea.*

*

*Plug holes and oil the boat regularly,
Never forget the preparations required for the sail,
Tomorrow, if not today, you will have to row your boat
to the main current.*

Shah's religiosity not only pivots his personal salvation but that of other's also. He prays for all the merchants whatever their creed, faith, and breed may be:

*They loaded their ships with cloves, cardamoms, textile,
sparkling pearls,
They stored costly cargo on the hold,
Lateef says: they fastened their boats with ropes
While embarking they made offering to the Prophet,*

The boats sailing in the strong down-wind, take care of them o God.

*

*Their sails are set, ropes new, and oars of ivory,
Loaded with goods the seafarers have commenced their
voyage,
O Unique Allah, let them reach their destination safely.*

*

*Their sails are set, ropes new and boatmen skilled,
Seafarers have embarked on voyage and neared the mid
current,
O Allah, kindly protect the boats that are sailing zealously*

Now the scene changes. Though the sea is dangerous but it is full of pearls and we meet aquanauts who put on mask of glass on their faces and dive deep in the sea. They explore the sea, cross waves and dark whirlpools, and find jewels and pearls in the depth which they bring up and distribute among the people.

*Those who explored sea prospered,
They brought bunches of jewels from the depths,
Lateef says, they found diamonds in the waves,
Which are indeed priceless and precious.*

*

*As is their wont, the aquanauts explored the sea,
And penetrating the depths, collected pearls
Which they brought up to give away with their own
hands.*

*

*Braving breakers and dark whirlpools, the aquanauts
explored the sea and brought up priceless pearls.
When they went deep down in the sea wearing glass
masks crossed waves and dark whirlpools,
Having explored the sea they brought priceless pearls.*

Pearls should be offered only to the real connoisseurs of genuine gems as only they can evaluate their real worth. If the pearl is unwittingly broken in two pieces, one should take it to the real jeweler who will make it whole again. Human heart is also like a precious pearl. When it is intact, it is worth one

million but when it breaks its worth is beyond millions. Truth is like pure gold but its connoisseurs are rare. The rolled and fake gold is valued and the genuine is rejected so much so that one feels embarrassed to offer truth. One should not associate with those jewelers who cannot evaluate genuine gold. They will break it in two pieces and throw it on the ground. In that case one should take his golden coin only to those who are the real connoisseurs of gold.

Musical Interpretation.

Sriraga is one of the major six marga ragas of our classical framework of ragas. It is the first raga of Guru Giranth Sahib, the holy religious book of Sikh religion. For Sikh musicologists Sri raga is the legendary philosopher's stone, which turns iron into gold. The ancient Hindu scholars ascribed human qualities to nature and thus personified non-personal phenomena. Ragas were also personified as gods and goddesses. Sri is goddess Lakshami (fortune) and wife of Vishnu, who is one of the gods of Hindu trinity. When Vishnu incarnated himself as Rama Sri incarnated herself as Seeta and later as Rukmani, the chief queen of Krishna and Radha the beloved of Krishna. Sri raga is portrayed as woman of mature beauty seated on a lotus with lotuses in her hands. Two elephants that sprinkle water on her with their trunks, attend her. Such mythical legends are woven around the ragas to help us to have clear comprehension of the mood of the raga

The singing time of the raga is evening and it exemplifies soul in the mist of ignorance and it is illuminated with Sriraga. Its ascending and descending notes are:

Sa-Re (flat)- Ga (sharp)- Ma (sharp)-Pa- Dha(flat)-
Ni(sharp)

Sa-Ni(sharp)- Dha(flat)-Pa-Na(sharp)-Ga(sharp)-Re(flat)-Sa
Vadi note:Re

Samvadi:Pa

It evokes fear and devotion

Melody of Seafarers (*Sur Samoondi*)

Another long poem about the sea and the seafarers. In Sriraga the focus is on the sea, its terrible currents, breakers and the ships, full of cargo, floating on turbulent, ferocious and tumultuous waves. Whereas in this poem the sea is serene and tranquil and is in the background. In the forefront is the harbor throbbing with life, hubbub and clamor. Some seafarers are preparing for the voyage and some have come from the voyage. Some boats have set sail, some are sailing back and some are loitering aimlessly near the shore. People have crowded around the seafarers who have arrived from long voyage and the seafarers who are about to depart. Some are happy and some are sad, this is life. And superimposed on this entire landscape are the persons of the young wives of the seafarers. Some are jubilant that their consorts have come back, some are looking forward for their arrival and praying for their early coming and some, though are with their consorts, are in a state of intense anxiety that one day they will again embark upon a new voyage throwing them in the abyss of loneliness to suffer pangs of separation. Their anxiety erodes their happiness. Thus we see one of them clinging to the oar of her husband's boat imploring him not to leave her alone. She beseeches her mother-in-law to ask her son to give up seafaring. But suddenly the north breeze starts blowing and seafarers begin their preparation for a new voyage:

*North wind blows evoking dread in my heart,
They are twisting ropes and greasing their boats.*

*

*Today too the seafarers are talking of putting out,
They are ready to go, my tears cannot stop them,
How can I when they have already untied the ropes and put
the boats out to sea.*

*Sit beside hawser of his boat,
You walk in forgetfulness while they are readying to
embark overseas,
Their home is sea, why did you not go with them*

*

*Grasping the oar she does not let them push the boat out,
My love, stay one night for my sake,
Do not embark on a long journey leaving me alone.*

Despite her entreaties and beseeching, sobbing and tears, the sea trader rowed away, leaving her on the shore alone. She feels as if the entire harbor and the market places are deserted.

*Neither there are boats at the pier, nor the converse of the
sea-traders,*

*O mate, today too the separation wounds inflicted by the
sea farers are smarting,*

O neighbors, their separation will kill me

*

*They rowed away leaving me forever,
Ages have gone by, no one has returned from there,
Their grief of departure will kill the wretched woman.*

*

*Those were the days of blooming youth when the beloved
embarked on voyage,*

*Even my tearful imploring could not make them stay, o
mates what should I do?*

He set the sail leaving me on spikes.

*

*Probably it was because my love was feeble that he rowed
away, while I stood there,*

*I did not think ahead to go with him,
I should have tied myself inside the boat with ropes.
It saddens her that other women are cozy with their
husbands but she is alone in the cool winter nights
My beloved is away from pier, I am passing
dreary cold days,
O mother, do not probe my wounds,
Else my grief of separation will become known to
neighbors.*

Then with change in the season cool breeze blows from north, branches of trees bloom, her body also blossoms with desires and she calls for her consort to be home.

*The north wind blows, tips of reeds have blossomed,
come back my love
I made many offerings for you, return my dear.*

And then suddenly in the infinite darkness of the sea, the banner lights of the vessels of seafarers twinkle and her heart, darkened with despondence, blooms with joy. But she is not sure whether it is her beloved's vessel or not.

*Seeing the sails she cried, o mother, the seafarers have
come,
May be my love is in this ship.*

*

*The buntings are seen fluttering but sails are
not yet visible,
They are joyous whose beloved have come back,*

*

*For the one I was asking the sea-worshippers all the time
about their return, have
Comeback and all my wishes are fulfilled*

*

*Buntings of the ship of the sails are shimmering all round,
O mother, seafarers have come lavishly made up,
It was why that the crow kept cawing about since
yesterday.*

Musical Interpretation.

Samoondi is one of those ragas, which were invented by Shah Lateef but which, as stated earlier, are lost and we are left with their names only. Mostly Sur Samoondi is sung in raga Jhanglo. Jhanglo is a distorted form of Zanglo an Arab-Iranian raga. Some ascribe its origin to Ameer Khusro who invented it by combining raga Iraq and raga Maufiq. While some associate it with raga Bhairween and Asavari. In raga Jhanglo both the forms of note GA (sharp and flat) are used, flat GA is more frequently used than the sharp GA. Some claim that note arrangement of raga Peelu and Jhanglo is same, even their Vadi and Sam vadi (Ga and Re) are same. As regard its name, it is said to have been named after a musical instrument known as Zangal. This instrument was either a big bell or cymbals. Zangi is also a call name for Negros in Arabia and there is every possibility that Zangla was a Negro raga, which came in the fold of Arabian music. Its mood is said to be of devotion, love and enthusiasm.

Melody of Unflinching Love (*Sur Sohni*)

The Tale

Once there lived a good old man on the bank of river Mehran. He had a beautiful daughter, whom he had named Sohni meaning 'the beautiful'. With the passage of time she blossomed into a paragon of beauty and every youth of the village longed to marry her. Among them was a young man named Dum, who lived on the other bank of the river. He was ugly and ill tempered, but being the son of the village head, he enjoyed many privileges. He also desired to marry Sohni. He sent his proposal, which was accepted. On the day of marriage the procession of the bridegroom went on boats to the opposite bank and having performed all the marriage rituals, they brought the bride to riverbank and waited for the boats, which had gone to fetch passengers from the opposite bank. While waiting they suddenly realized that they had forgotten a ritual generally referred to as 'milk drinking ritual', according to which, bride and bridegroom had to drink sweet milk from one tumbler. As skipping of this ritual was considered bad omen hence two near relatives of the newly-weds were sent to fetch milk from the neighborhood. The relatives had hardly gone a furlong or so when they saw a young and handsome herdsman sitting outside his hut and playing flute with masterly skill. His name was Sahar. He was also called 'Mehtar' after his profession of herdsman of buffaloes. They told him their purpose of coming and requested for the milk. Incidentally at that time milk was not available with him. Besides all his buffaloes had gone out for grazing. He suddenly remembered four saints who had a short

while earlier graced him with their visit. They too had demanded milk and at that time also milk was not available with Sahar and his milk buffaloes had gone for grazing. The saints said that they would not drink milk of any mated buffalo or cow, but of a heifer or an unmated buffalo. It was impossible. But the saints made it possible. They asked him to milk the heifer. He tried and to his utter surprise the heifer produced milk. The saints drank half and the remaining they gave back for him to drink half of it and preserve the remaining half. Now remembering the preserved portion he brought it and gave it to the visitors. They took him for a saintly person and requested him to accompany them and give milk to the bride and the bridegroom with his own hands so that any bad influence of not performing the ritual may be evaded. Sahar agreed and accompanied them. Reaching there he gave the milk tumbler to the bride. The milk tasted so good that Sohni drank it all, not leaving a drop for the groom. As she drank the milk she felt as if she was being transformed into another person. She stared at the herdsman and felt as if some heavenly light was emanating from his eyes and penetrating her soul. The herdsman also felt the same. He had never seen such a heavenly beauty in human form. Both of them fell in love at first sight. In the meanwhile boats had arrived, which the procession boarded and left the herdsman desolate and bewildered.

Sohni and Mehar had fallen so deeply in love that they were practically dying to see each other. And when at night the groom came to Sohni, she did not allow him to touch her as her body and soul belonged to Mehar. Mehar was also in grief and he gave vent to it by playing sad and melancholic tunes on his flute. When Sohni heard the sad tunes her whole body and soul were stirred. It was a call of love to love and soul to soul. Eventually she decided to go to the other bank and meet Mehar. And one night she sneaked out of the house, took a pitcher of baked clay and swimming by it came to Mehar's hut. Mehar was overjoyed. They were together for the night and parted with grief before dawn. Now it became a routine of Sohni to swim by a pitcher, meet Mehar and return before dawn. But these secret meetings did not remain secret for long. Sohni's mother-in-law

discovered their secret. And to stop Sohni from meeting Mehar, she replaced the baked pitcher with an unbaked one. But this did not stop Sohni from going to meet her beloved. She took the unbaked pitcher and entered the river. It was a dark, rainy and an ominous windy night. The river was rising. Its waves were leaping like lion on her but she continued swimming on the unbaked pitcher. Soon the pitcher started dissolving in the water. Seeing herself drowning she called her beloved but anon, waves engulfed her and she drowned. Hearing her calls, Mehar rushed out of his hut to the riverbank and saw Sohni sinking in the midstream. Heart-broken, he too jumped into the deadly swelling river to join his beloved and both lovers were united forever.

Introduction

Like all folktale-inspired melodies of Shah Sur Sohni is also an exposition of passions and emotions of human heart in love. We know that folktales spring from collective consciousness of the people. Hence they reflect their ideals, aspirations, spirituality and their unrealized desires and dreams. These are sort of fantasies deeply rooted in the reality of people's soul. The characters of folktales are mostly not individuals but archetypes and stock characters, and situations are contrived to suit the characters, where they act and move about like puppets. Thus the ideals and aspirations they exemplify are brought home to the reader. Sohni, the protagonist of the tale, is also not an individual but a paradigm of ideal love, devotion and commitment, and Shah, with his masterly treatment, has exploited all the potentials of spiritual and physical love inherent in her character and thus elucidated his mystic perception of love. While interpreting the tale, Shah takes the reader beyond the characters, situations and events of the tale and tells through them something more subtle and cosmic and thus allegorizes the tale. It would be stating the obvious to say that allegories have a double meaning, a primary or surface meaning and a secondary or sub surface meaning and as such allegories are to be interpreted at two levels.

As the poem opens we find ourselves in a frightful scenario. The night is dark, sky is overcast with dark rumbling clouds, rain is torrential, wind is so fast that it appears it would uproot every thing, river is tempestuous and furious, waves are lashing against the banks, and on the bank is standing a young and beautiful damsel with a pitcher of unbaked clay under her arm. And the first verse of the poem reveals her state of mind. She is a damsel in love and it is love that has brought her on this fearful night to the river. River is, no doubt, tumultuous, but more tumultuous is the heart that is in love:

*Swift is current, speedy is streams' flow, but where there
is love the swiftness is unique,
meditation,
O God, bring back the one, who has enthralled my heart.*

River also represents a gigantic force of nature and Sohni, a frail and weak woman, is an embodiment of human determination to defeat forces of nature however powerful and gigantic they may be:

*The river with its roaring whirlpools is horrifying,
Logs hurtling downstream are whirled badly by waves,
Expert swimmers are frightened; even those who swim
using inflated goatskin dare not to go,
Help me through, o Lord, where the waves block my way*

With the progression of the poem we learn that Sohni, a married woman, is in love with a man other than her husband. This indeed is immoral. She is also aware of the immorality of her love and, being mindful of the reproaches of her mates and women of neighborhood on that account, she responds:

*They, who saw the countenance of Sahar lord only once,
Could not sleep soundly with their husbands,
They entered without a pitcher heading for the vortex.*

*

*O mates, if you behold the beloved in the way I have,
You will not find restful sleep by your husbands' side,
But pick up the pitcher to enter the river even before me.*

Admitted that her beloved is very handsome and so charming that any woman, who sees him, is charmed and forgets all, even her life and the sanctity of nuptial relationship, but the handsomeness and charm of man's countenance cannot justify a married woman to love him and cheat on her husband. This is a big moral flaw of the tale and the original authors, the people, being fully aware of it covered it by adding a spiritual and metaphysical dimension to the tale. They added an episode of four saints, who performed the miracle of milking a heifer and when Mehar and Sohni drank that miraculous milk, they fell in love with each other at first sight:

*She had a sip of love from Mehar's hands,
Its taste intoxicated the damsel fully,
The love dart, sharper than the iron dart, pierced her
through.*

*

*She took whey of love from Mehar's hand,
Its single sip proved to be too much for her,
She would not rest until she meets Mehar.*

Their love was preordained and hence above good and evil. Destiny played its role and the chain of events, caused by the destiny, brought them together.

As already said, Shah has interpreted the tale to express his Sufi creed. But it is always difficult to interpret any literary piece particularly poetry because mostly there exists communication gap between the writer and his reader. Even in our day to day life we experience this gap in communication with others. There often exists a difference in what we intend a statement to mean and what our audience interpret it to mean. In literature, with whatsoever lucidity and unambiguity the writer may communicate, communication gap between the writer and the reader is always there. Sometimes this gap we find even between writer and his writings. It is said that once when Robert Browning was asked what a line from one of his poems meant, he said, "When I wrote that line both I and God knew what I meant. Now, God only knows." In the same way William Faulkner had responded to a similar question about one of his

story by saying that he “was so corned up’ when he wrote his piece that he could not be expected to know what he intended. But it is also a fact that every poem reveals itself unto the reader in its own way and every reader interprets it according to his own social and cultural background and capabilities. Accordingly, I interpret this poem as an allegory of seeker’s trials and tribulations during his spiritual voyage. This aspect of the poem comes up when the upper layer of the allegory dilutes and we see through it the voyaging soul in the persona of a married woman, and symbolism of her marital relationship and relationship of love with other man than her husband is crystallized. Shah interprets her apparent extra-marital love in terms of spirituality and spiritual sublimity:

*Sohni is unwashed without Sahar,
Beside the one, who herds curved-horn buffaloes, she gets
purified.*

*

*Sohni is all impure without Sahar,
His abode removes all impurities,
She gets purified, when she is with the milk-drinker.*

*

*Sohni is unclean without Sahar,
She washes not her hair with home water,
Being by the side of the beloved is like she has bathed.*

Because of social and moral restraints, Sohni stealthily comes out of her house to meet her beloved and as such she prefers dark and moonless nights for her clandestine meetings:

*Let it be dark night, fie on a bright moonlit one,
So that I may not see any face before seeing Mehar.*

But Shah advises her to go to meet her beloved not under the cover of darkness but in bright daylight:

*O Sohni, do not always seek dark night,
Go meet your beloved openly in broad daylight.*

Her love is so sacred that when she drowns, every wave is crimsoned and the current fragrancd.

*Every wave is crimson; the current is more fragrant than musk,
Water is profuse in scent of amber,
It all was only yesterday that Sohni entered into whirlpools.*

The river is also not an ordinary river and crossing it is a spiritual experience. And having gained that experience, Shah tells her to guide others as to how to cross the river:

*What you saw in the current, tell it all on the other bank,
The river is deep, the surf very high, see that you don't wet your shirtfront,
Keep Sahar in mind so that you may cross the current safely.*

*

Perceive him, beyond perception though he is, His love is nevertheless nearby. It is difficult to perceive him sans river.

The poem can also be interpreted in terms of women's liberation. Sohni does not like the man she is married to. It is a forced marriage and thus she is a victim of social determinism and injustice. She revolts against the social injustice and breaks the social shackles of forced marriage unmoved by taunts and reproaches of her mates and neighborhood women. She finds liberation in her extra-marital love.

This poem is, in fact, a vision of love. It is love that leads the seeker across the eddying and inundating river, the surging waves and the river beasts to the ultimate goal:

They alone discovered the beloved, who were guided by love.

*

Break the unbaked pitcher; go into the deep waters with love.

*

O Sohni, longing leads the real lovers to their destination,

*

*Love is boundless, so is the grief of love,
There is no limit to yearning, nor to grief,
Love knows no numerations; it alone can find its own
depth.*

*

*Love knows not numerations, understand it and be close
to it,
O damsel, there is no end, no beginning of the beloved.*

As the poem moves on we realize that all the images, the river in storm, the tumultuous atmosphere, a young beautiful girl, the pitcher of unbaked clay, and the beloved, get linked with metaphysical and cosmic realities, and allegorical relationship of Sohni with Sahar is crystallized:

*The adorned beauty of Sahar was there before the Book of
Destiny was writ,
Neither the words 'Be and it Became' were pronounced,
nor there was any other converse,
Talk of Sohni was heard even before the creation of the
angels,
Lateef says, it was then that she fell in love with beloved
Mehar.*

Shah, being a Wahdat-al-Wujoodi (unity of being or all is one) Sufi, has lucidly elaborated his mystic thought throughout his poetry. In this poem also he has expounded his mystic doctrine by giving example of Mansoor. In Sufi literature, Hussain Bin Mansoor Hilaj, is a recurring metaphor of the proclaimer of Truth. He was the first Sufi, who proclaimed that 'I am Truth' and was hanged for it. And Shah, addressing the prosecutors of Mansoor, tells them that every thing in the universe is proclaiming, like Mansoor, 'I am the Truth,' whosoever and how many of them they would hang:

*On waters and land there is only one refrain, trees and
bushes echo the same,
So they all deserve to be hanged,*

All are Masoors, how many of them will you hang.

*

Everywhere is talk of the Beloved, everywhere He is present,

The entire universe is Mansoor, how many of them will you butcher.

As all is the manifestation of the One, there is no separate being of Sahar, Sohni or the river:

Sahar, Sohni and the river are one and the same,

It is all a mystery, an enigma.

Though the poem is a spiritual voyage, Shah has expressed his spirituality through sensual relationship of man and woman. The tinkling of buffaloes' bells vibrates in Sohni's whole body and all her limbs get aroused:

My sisters, tinkling of buffaloes' bells has stirred up all my limbs,

The love that the tinkling has evoked I cannot tell,

The one in whose protection I have put myself is sending me inspiring messages.

*

Moved as I am by the bells, how can I sleep in peace?

I think of Sahar lord many times a day,

I have put on fetters of Mehar's love unto death.

And then this sensuousness turns into spirituality. These bells start vibrating all over and entire universe resounds with tinkling of the bells of some other Herdsman:

Bells of the woodlander dwellers are tickling all around,

While asleep, sudden sound of bells reached my ears,

It is unbecoming of me to stay back, my heart melts at the sound.

*

Waves have thousand forms but appearance of water is one,

Forget to fathom the unfathomable,

Only a few chosen ones reached where there is

*limitlessness of love,
Forget searching other landings, so that you be near the
beloved.*

*And when Sohni drowns the whole mystery is unfolded
and she hears calls of his beloved after death:
The pitcher broke, the woman died, all aids vanished,
She became lifeless in midstream, alas, all props were lost,
Oneness effaced adornment of Sohni.*

*

*The pitcher broke, the woman died, all aids vanished,
It was then that Sohni heard the calls of Mehar.*

Random thoughts about the tale.

Sohni, the symbol of love, devotion, determination, and commitment, lives not only in the folktale but also in the lamenting notes of Sohni raga. According to a tradition, raga Sohni, being sad and of mournful mood, is played on 'Sarangi' on the death of some renowned musician or singer. It is a sort of dirge sung or played in commemoration of the dead and its lamenting notes are the echoes of Sohni's last throes. But majority of the musicians don't agree that raga Sohni is an evolutionary form of the folk tune in which Sohni tale was sung. Salient points of their argument are as follow.

(a) In every raga, the composed pieces have two sections, one is called Asthai and the other Antra. Asthai is the main part of the composition. If the composition is vocal, the Asthai as well as Antra is in verses having reference to basic human emotions and legendary characters. Had the Sohni raga sprung from the folktale Sohni-Mehar and named after Sohni the main character of the tale, we would have found their reference in old Asthaies and Antras.

(b) Had raga Sohni been the evolutionary form of a folk tune, the practice of singing Kafees or verses of the tale during the period of its origin should have persisted till now, and the folk singers, should even now, had sung the Kafees and verses of the tale if not strictly in Sohni raga, at least a tune resembling the Sohni raga. But it is not so, and even in Punjab, the place of origin of the tale, there is no such practice or tradition.

According to certain research scholars, this tale was enacted

in real life during the reign of Mughal Emperors Shahjehan or Muhammad Shah. The real name of the hero Maheewal (herdsman) was Izat Beg, a young merchant of Bukhara, who had come to India for trading. The very name of the hero suggests that the tale had sprung somewhere in Mughal period. But the writer of a book on music, titled 'Maadnal Moseequi, tells us that Sohni Qawali was invented by Ameer Khushro, which means that raga Sohni or Sohni Qawali had originated much earlier than the Sohni folktale. (Dr Nabi Bux Baluch)

In Punjabi literature, the earliest mention of the tale is in Guru Gobind Singh's (1660-1708) book *Tirita Chriter*, meaning feminine ruses. It contains more than four hundred folktales and Sohni is one of them. But it appears that this tale was not much current among the people of Punjab at that time because the great people's poet, Shah Hussain, has not referred to any character, event, or artifact of the tale in his poetry whereas he uses characters of Heer and Ranjha as symbols by personifying his concept of what human love ideally ought to be. In Punjab, the first poet, who versified this tale, was Hashim Shah (1745) and after lapse of about one hundred years Fazal Hussain Tabassum (1835), Fazil Shah and some other poets rendered it into poetry in Urdu. According to Fazil Shah, this tale was enacted in the reign of Shahjehan. But Munshi Ganesh Das Gujrati (1848) claims that this tale occurred in the reign of Muhammad Shah (1719-1748) (ibid)

In Sindh this tale was current among the masses in 1525 and Mian Shah Karim, the great grand father of Shah Abdul Lateef Bhittai, used its characters as symbols without giving details of the tale knowing that the tale was popular among the people.

In the Sindhi version of the tale, the names of major and minor characters take us back to the time, when local Rajpoot tribes like Soomra and Samma had embraced Islam but, even after their conversion, had retained Rajpoot names like Soom Rai (present distorted form of which is Soomra), Bhoonger Rai, Dev Rai, etc. In Sindhi version of the tale, name of the hero is not Izzat Beg as in the Punjabi version, but Sahar, a local Rajpoot name, and he was from Nangomero clan. Sohni was from Samtiya clan, and her husband Dum was from Wahoocha clan.

The ruler of the period was Dev Rai. There is mention of river Lohano in the tale, which, according to research scholars, was flowing in 12th and 13th centuries (ibid)

In Sindh, even on folk level, the Kafees and verses, pertaining to Sohni, are always sung in a tune composed in Sohni raga.

Shah Lateef Bhittai composed Vaaees and verses of Sohni folktale in Sohni raga.

The folktale originated in Sindh in 12th and 13th centuries and then traveled to Punjab in the Mughal period acquiring local color and locale in the process.

The tale was sung in a folk tune that later evolved into classical raga, retaining its original name. We know that mostly all classical ragas are the evolution of the ancient folk tunes.

Regarding the tradition of musicians that they play Sohni raga on the death of some renowned musician, nothing can be said as to how and since when this practice started among the musicians. Shah Lateef also considered this raga as a raga of a departing soul. After his intuitive apprehension that his time has come, he wrapped his body in a white sheet of cloth, retired to his Hujra (antechamber) and asked his disciples to sing the verses and vaaees of his Sur Sohni in Sohni raga. The Darveshs sang the raga for three days and when they went to see their murshid in the Hujra, they found him dead. Even now on the last day of the Urs, the day of his departure, Darveshs sing Sohni raga to mourn his death. It may be due to the inherent emotive value of the raga that it is considered a raga of mourning.

Musical Interpretation

It is a popular raga of the classical frame of ragas. Its ascending and descending notes are:

SA-DHA-MA-DHA – NI- SA

SA-NI-DHA- MA-DHA-DHA-GA-GA-RE-SA

Its super abundant note (vadi) is Dha (A) and the note used less than the vadi but more than the other notes (samvadi) is Ga (E) and as such the mood of the raga is solemn, serious and grave.

Melody of Odyssey of Being (*Sur Sassui*)

The Tale

Sassui was daughter of a rich Brahman, named Naoon. When she was born a soothsayer was called to tell about the future of the newly born child. The soothsayer, having consulted his book and charts told the Brahman that when his daughter would be of marriage age she would marry a Muslim. This gave great shock to him as he was Hindu priest and his daughter was destined to marry a man from another religion. This marriage would put him in a religious embarrassment. Hence he and his wife decided to get rid of the child. They placed the child in a wooden box specially made for the purpose and floated it on the river. This box was picked by one Muslim washer man named Muhammad of Bhanbhore, then a prosperous seaport and now in ruins. The washer man had no child of his own so he took the child as a gift from God and brought her up as his own real daughter. As she was very beautiful, he named her Sassui meaning Moon. When she grew up she became more beautiful. At that time there was a famine in the neighboring country of Kech Makran and the ruler sent a caravan of musk under his son Punhoon, to barter grain. Sassui and Punhoon saw each other in the market place and got entwined in each other's love, which, ultimately, resulted in their marriage. Punhoon sent the caravan back to Kech. When Punhoon's father learnt that his son had married a washer girl he felt disgraced. He immediately sent his three sons to bring Punhoon back to him. They arrived in Bhanbhore on their secret mission where they were welcomed by their unsuspecting brother and sister-in-law. They were

lodged in separate quarters where they feasted and made merry together with their brother till dawn. One night, when Sassui was fast asleep alone in her own chamber, they had Punhoon drink glass of drugged milk, which made him unconscious. The brothers lost no time in tying him to a camel's back and mounting their own camels, they set a fast pace for the Kech. Becoming awake at the dead of night and finding herself alone on bed, Sassui looked for Punhoon here, there and all around. He was nowhere, nor were his brothers and their companions. A search of the ground revealed the camel tracks going westward. Lovesick as she was, she could not bear separation from her consort even for a moment. Her mind dead set on finding Punhoon, she forthwith went in pursuit alone, on foot and without any wherewithal. It was an arduous trek through a rocky region. For days she trudged on without finding a trace of the kidnappers, losing all sense of discretion, she wandered in wilderness, hungry, thirsty and thoroughly tired

One day she met a shepherd who, seeing a young and beautiful girl all alone in the wilderness, tried to molest her. There was no way for her to escape the beast in human guise, but to seek God's help, which she did by praying. Her prayer was answered and the ground, she stood on, opened and mother earth took her in her embrace. The shepherd repented and made her grave on the very spot.

On the other end Punhoon, somehow, managed to escape. When he reached the newly built grave, he asked the shepherd as to whose grave it was. The shepherd told him the whole story. Punhoon also prayed to God, the earth once again opened its bosom and took him in.

Introduction

We know that Shah has used folktales as medium because by speaking in characters, events and images of the tale he is able to say more than what he could have said through plain words. Reader identifies himself with characters and events and he feels 'he has risen to more superior idea of the thing.' The poem moves forward slowly, surely and ever definitely near to what Shah intends to bring home to the reader.

It appears that the folktale 'Sassui Punhoo' was the most favorite tale of Shah Abdul Lateef as he has versified it in five different ragas, probably because Sassui is all love and is an emblem of unshakable and insurmountable human determination. The poem begins with Sassui's resolve to go forward:

*Sooner or later I have to go to Hoat,
Waste not toil of the laborer, my Lord,
Do me favor of meeting the camel-man during my life.*

She is in love and is physically and spiritually scorched by thirst for the beloved. Beloved's beauty has evoked such thirst which, according to Shah, could be satisfied only with thirst:

*Even if yearning grilled her, Sassui would still yearn,
Sassui has drunk cupfuls of Punhoon's love, but her
craving is not satisfied,
More one drinks from these waters, more intense becomes
one's thirst.*

*

*Perceiving the dazzling beauty, whosoever had a sip,
His painful craving increased manifold,
It remained unsatisfied though they were always in
midstream,*

*

*Those, who are in love, their thirst is untold,
Drink cupfuls of thirst, sharpen your thirst with thirst,
Serve me a drink, Punhoon, so that I may quench my
thirst with thirst.*

This thirst drives Sassui in the wilderness, in the mountainous narrow passes and on the mountain peaks, which are so high and difficult to climb that even the strong climbers are unable to scale them:

*Sassui crossed that mountain, which had defeated men,
How much lofty the mountain be, it is plain for those who
are in love.*

*

*I care not for the mountain that obstructs me to go to
Aareechas,
If there are millions of mountain passes I will cross all*

*

*I will go out and look for the camels, in the wilderness,
O mountain, be aside from in front of me, else you will
break into pieces.*

Like his other folktale-based melodies, in this melody also Shah has not narrated the story in sequential order but has given flashes of the story by implying the technique of the stream of consciousness. While telling about Sassui's miseries in the course of her trek, he suddenly starts describing arrival of Punhoon, his caravan and the fragrance that filled the dreary and dark landscape. A caravan, carrying cargo of musk, passes through the mountain passes and the entire arid and rugged mountainous setting is fragranced. The camel men are tall and handsome with white turbans and twisted black beards. Their mounts are beautifully decorated with tiny bells laced in colorful threads around their neck and diamonds studded and silk-tasseled saddlecloth covering their backs. Tree boughs of roadside touch the leader of the caravan and the entire desert and the woods are perfumed.

*The entire desert was filled with fragrance, even the
mountains emitted scents,
The city of Bhanbhore giggled with pleasure and was
wrapped with fragrance,
The faces of princesses radiated with happiness and the
miseries of slave girls were over.*

*

*When fragrance reached the mountains the trees also
started emitting the fragrance of Punhoon
O my mother! My desire is fulfilled and Punhoon has
come.*

According to Sufi creed lovers know each other even before they meet. It was Punhoon's intuitive awareness of Sassui's presence in Bhanbhore that had made him lead his caravan

there. Sassui had also intuited Punhoon's presence in Kech, his homeland, and willed him to come to Bhanbhore:

*They may come, o God, whose coming gives immense
pleasure,
Somehow I may visit the land of camel drivers,
I may cross the mountain passes and hear their voices,
I would be their slave girl and name myself Gulboo if I
would recognize the leader of the caravan.*

*

*She sees him in the market place and falls in love with
him at first sight:
Punhoon gave this miserable person a cup of love
He kindled flame in my heart and kept it burning
After seeing the locks of my beloved I lost all peace.
I am not being cured of sickness caused by the locks of
beloved,
Yesterday I saw his locks poised on his forehead*

Like in other melodies based on folktales, in this melody also, Shah has ascribed to the characters certain qualities which transcend their reality of folk character to some other reality. And Bhanbhore becomes a dirty, filthy and evil city while Punhoon is incarnated into a person who redeems the city and its people:

*The city of Bhanbhore was dirty and filthy; Aryani
cleansed and washed it,
The lord of Haro Mountain removed all the fears from
people's hearts,
The poor and helpless girls learnt to print their cloths and
made Punhoon the design
And printing seal,
The matchless came and the grief stricken poor girls were
beautified
They sat on the wedding cots as brides with corner of their
mantle drawn on their faces
So as the bridegroom draws away the veils and sees their
faces*

*

*Bhanbhore was mistaken and did not follow Punhoon,
The city did not recognize the matchless Punhoon
Only those could recognize him who saw him with their
hearts.*

The second running theme of the poem is awakening of the seeker to new mundane and celestial realities. In Sufi diction, awakening is not termination of sleep but cognitive awareness. The literal meaning of Buddha is not wise, as is generally understood, but it means the awakened one. During his meditations he had awakened to new realities of life and was therefore called Budha. Sassui was asleep when brothers of Punhoon kidnapped him and when she awoke the entire situation was changed. She thus had awakened to new situation entailing miseries and hardships.

Apart from major themes, Shah has elucidated some of his Sufi precepts in these poems. In mystic thought, words are used with different denotations and connotations than in day-to-day life or even in literature. For instance words 'death' and 'nudity' are used with different nuances of meaning. Death does not mean physical death but dying in one state of mind and coming into another. It is a psychological and spiritual reincarnation. According to Sufi thought, we live in the delusion of having individual self, whereas there is only one Universal Self and each one of us is that Self, but we are not aware of it and when we become aware of it we die out as individual selves and immerse into Universal Self.

Die and then live, so that you perceive beloved's beauty,

*

*Die today before the day fixed for death so that you be
honored,*

*So far you are alive escape from Bhanbhore, o woman,
Be with Punhoon so that you meet the angel of death.*

*

*Die so that you are honored, life is an obstruction in union
with the camelman,*

*O imbecile, have courage, give up life, so that you may
find your friend.*

*

Die so that you are honored, be not hostile to yourself,

Nudity is also used in different connotation. In the world of art there is difference between the naked and the nude. 'To be naked is to be devoid of clothes, and the word implies some of the embarrassment which most of us feel in this condition. The word 'nude', on the other hand, carries, in educated usage, no uncomfortable overtone. The vague image it projects in the mind is not that of a huddled and vulnerable defenseless body, but of a balanced, prosperous and confident body the body re-formed.' In the mystic thought nudity is a symbol of having no veil whatsoever between the lover and the beloved, seeker and the sought. All desires, dreams and attachments other than those of the beloved are veils. These veils are to be lifted. This state of the seeker and the sought is a state of nudity. In Hindu mythology, we see god Krishna hiding the clothes of the milk-maids (Gopees) bathing in a pond and asking them to come out nude. This nudity is spiritual nudity without any barrier or veil whatsoever between the seeker and the sought, lover and the beloved.

Come out all of you naked, giving up greed and selfishness,

*

*Come out all of you naked, casting away clothes,
That one will be in the front, who will take nothing with her.*

*

*The one who took nothing with her, reached the beloved
And that one, who went all wrapped, lost all chances of union with the beloved.*

While describing Sassui's wanderings in the mountains Shah projects the wild spirit of the mountains and creates images of nature which is crude, cruel, callous and multi-faceted entity and, in a way, has mythologized nature so that it could be comprehended. He is the master of creating setting or atmosphere synchronizing with the mood of the characters and

feel of the melody. Hence there are awful images of mountainous terrain and he uses technique of repetition to intensify the awe. And one sees Sassui wandering in these awful and fearful mountains to find her beloved and one is all pity for her. But one's pity turns into wonder when she, having suffered so much in the mountains for meeting the beloved, gives up her desire of meeting the beloved:

*I may search for you and never find you
May be that there be no physical union with you,
So that every part of my body should not stop craving for
you.*

*

*May be that I search for you and don't find you, my
beloved!
May be that you be away from me,
So that I should not live in peace without you and my
body never gets satiated.*

This is a paradox, and the reader is hard put to grasp the truth. There are other paradoxical verses also which are likely to confuse the reader:

*Whatever one gains in separation never gains in union,
The beloved came to my abode and separated me from the
Beloved.*

*

*O separation, turn round and come to me, union has
created chasm between me and the Beloved.
The beloved healed the wounds of separation, which I was
nourishing.*

One fails to grasp as to how her beloved's union separated her from him, and created chasm between her and the beloved? Then she says:

*The sorrows and pain showed me the path of Beloved
I give hundreds of pleasures in lieu of a painful love.*

*

*O mates, the pain of separation from the beloved is my
guide in the desert,*

These paradoxes are resolved when we learn about Shah's concept of pain and suffering.

Shah's concept of sufferings

It is well to repeat constantly that man is by nature a pleasure seeker and his every action springs from his instinctual impulse to attain pleasure and escape pain. Greeks believed that virtue is the sole aim of life and the sole aim of virtue is pleasure. The Greek philosopher Aristippus (c. 400-365 B.C), disciple of Socrates, maintained that pleasure is an end in itself, the only good; and pain the only evil. Morality is an activity, which yields pleasure, hence every human action derives its value from the pleasure that accompanies it and virtue has no value on its own account. No moral law externally imposed can invalidate the absolute claim of pleasure. In pursuit of pleasure nothing is wicked, nothing is evil provided only it satisfies individual's thirst for pleasure. Pleasure can be of body and mind. Bodily pleasure being more potent and intense is preferable to the spiritual pleasure. Aristippus realized that his concept of pleasure might drive man in the lowest abysses of sensuality and bestiality, he, therefore, tried to put some restraints on the pursuit of pleasure by saying that one must exercise prudence, foresight and intelligence because there is always the likelihood of complete unrestrained pursuit of pleasure resulting in pain and disaster.

Admitted that the mainspring of our actions is the attainment of maximum pleasure but what is in us that makes us undergo sufferings or watch others undergoing sufferings? It has also been a subject of debate among the *littérateurs* as to why we enjoy seeing tragedy drama depicting dreadful and frightful scenes of human sufferings? When we see king Oedipus, not knowing that he is killing his real father, kills him and not knowing that the queen he is marrying is his mother, marries her, stands all alone in front of hostile fate, plucks his eyes; cries and says:

***“I sowed the womb that my father sowed
of which I was born.”***

Our heart melts and we are all sympathy for him. Besides we are in the grip of fear, fear of the unknown, who has put him in that miserable human situation. Do we derive pleasure from seeing such human sufferings? If not, then what is in us that incites us to watch such sights? Different scholars have expressed different opinions. Some say, when we see tragedy drama we derive sadistic pleasure from the fall, sufferings; and miseries of a great hero. Some say that while watching the tragedy drama we imagine ourselves in the situation of the protagonist of the drama, and get masochistic pleasure. Still others say that witnessing the great man's fall and miseries we feel secure and happy and we thank God for not being the one who is suffering on the stage. However, we find pleasure in one way or the other even in watching people's sufferings. Some say, our pleasure lies in sympathy, which we feel for the sufferer. We experience pity and sympathy and we enjoy extending benevolence to the wretched. These superb human emotions, which otherwise are in dormancy, are aroused and we are more humane and in a sublime human state. Tragedians of ancient times said that 'When we see a person who is neither perfect in virtue and justice, nor someone who falls in misfortune through vice and depravity; but rather one who succumbs through miscalculation', we experience pity and fear and these feelings cause cathartic effect on us. We are spiritually purified, purged, and elevated. Sufis believe that with pain and suffering our self is crystallized to ourselves and we can see through ourselves the ultimate Truth. For Sufis, pleasure blinds one to oneself while pain brings one near the Truth. Hazrat Zunoon, the great Sufi is reported to have said that Prophet Moses once asked God where should one search for Him. God replied "In afflicted hearts". And Shah Lateef's concept of pain and suffering is that of Catharses. He believes that pain purges and purifies, and Sassui says:

***I begged my beloved to give grief in alms to me,
He gave me that and it purified
The inherently impure person like me.***

Heart in pain is like a piece of wood which only hollowed

by knives and made into lute emits soothing melodies. Pain is a path that leads the seeker to the real Beloved and this long poem is an elucidation of Shah's perception of pain and suffering. All the unbearable miseries, which Sassui experienced during her search crystallized her self and she started perceiving the reflection of the real Punhoo through her crystallized self but that reflection is not transparent. Sometimes it manifests itself in darkness and sometimes in light, sometimes it flashes like lightning in the dark clouds. She feels that a multicolored path has opened up in front of her:

*The Punhoo manifests himself like lightning in the clouds
I am treading his path with tearful eyes*

*

*The reflection of Punhoo manifests itself some times in a
light and sometimes in darkness,
A multicolored path has opened up before me,
First the Beloved will scratch out my color (with
sufferings) and then will saturate me with his own color.*

She reached this stage through suffering. Now she doesn't want to meet her husband Punhoo lest the grief, pain and restlessness evoked by hardships in her, should not subside by union with the mundane beloved. That is why she says:

*I may search for you and never find you
May be that there is no physical union with you,
So that every part of my body should not stop craving for
you.*

Hence Sassui does not want to meet her beloved husband whose footprints she has been tracing in the mountains because union with him will satiate her body and she will stop her search. She wants to search more, to suffer more so that she is cleansed and thus can perceive the real Beloved. After marrying Punhoo she had achieved her love object, but when her beloved left her and she suffered, she learnt that the real beloved was not the one whom she had wedded, but someone else and her husband beloved Punhoo created chasm between her and the real beloved. Hence she says:

*Whatever one gains in separation never gains in union,
The beloved came to my abode and separated me from the
Beloved.*

*

*O separation, turn round and come to me, union has
created chasm between me and the Beloved.
The Beloved healed the wounds of separation, which I was
nourishing.*

Her physical hunger transforms into spirituality, and
starvation of flesh for flesh into a symphony of soul, and she
says:

It is the pain that showed me the perfect Beloved.

And then the real meaning of all the symbols and
paradoxes is unfolded and we learn that the desert she was
wandering in was the desert of her being and she was searching
herself within her own self. Shah tells her that the Beloved is not
where she is imagining him to be:

*O you naïve, beloved is not where you think He is,
Don't go to mountains, your being is the oasis where He
dwells.*

Leave all others and ask from yourself about Him

*

*You are taking with you the One you are searching afar,
No one has ever had His trace by wandering in desert,
Ask from yourself so that you may find Him in yourself.
And then the stage comes where she discovers Him in
herself and she herself becomes the Beloved:*

*When I immersed in myself and had colloquy with myself
I discovered that neither there were mountains to climb,
nor I had*

*Any desire and care for the dwellers of Kech Makran.
I myself became Punhoo. I had suffered all the miseries
because I thought myself to be Sassui only.*

*

*O mates! Punhoo's brothers caused me sorrows to live
with*

But when I ran away from Bhanbhore all sorrows became pleasures

The veil between me and myself dropped and I myself became the Punhoo .

Historical Background of the Raga Abheri

Sur Aabri is Sindhi variation of the raga Abheri or Aheer. The latter is named after a tribe who came to the Indian sub-continent and made it its permanent abode. It is said that this tribe migrated to India from Abrivan, a land between Qandhar and Khurasan. When Cythians invaded India, Abheers accompanied them. They held high ranks in the Cythian army and Cythians gave them eastern coastal lands of Sindh, where they settled and established their rule. They also ruled over Deccan and Cocan. Their rule over Maharashtra lasted up to tenth century AD. Their rule spread over Western Rajisthan, South-west Kathiawar and South-East. Sindh and this entire track was known as country of Abheers. Their permanent abode was known as Abheer-war which still exists somewhere between Jhansi and Bhulsa. Historical evidence shows that they entered India in the beginning of Christian era. But we find their mention in Mahabharat, which was composed much earlier. In Mahabharat they are termed as Maleechs, meaning people without mouth. They were so called because they were foreigners and could not speak Sanskrit. Later the word meant a low cast people. It is also said that those who were born of a Brahman father and low caste mother were called Abheers. Abheers were herdsmen and they owned many cattle herds and pastures. Their language was known as Upbhiransh Prakrit. The scholars and linguists of early age and even of later period considered their language uncultured, undeveloped and crude. But in the seventeenth century we find Sanskrit scholars talking of their language as a highly developed and abundantly rich in literature.

Being herdsmen they were worshipers of Krishna, a pastoral god of fertility. Before emergence of Krishna concept as a warlord, he was known among his worshipers as Krishna-Govinda meaning "Lord of herdsmen". In early Tamil

anthologies he is known as “Mayon” meaning “the black one” who plays his flute and plays with milkmaids. His cult was carried to north by nomadic tribes of herdsmen, which appeared in Malva and western Deccan early in the Christian era. The Abheers are thought to have played a big role in propagation of Krishna Govinda worship and raga Abheri is probably one of the many tunes of the devotional songs sung by the Abheers while worshipping Krishna Govinda, which survived and came in the fold of classical ragas

Mr. O. Gosavmi, a prominent Indian musicologist, writing about Abheers, tells us that “Abhiras formed another tribe which had played important role in the history of Delhi and the regions around it. The people of the tribe still exist as sub-caste of the Hindu population in some parts of Delhi and Mathura district. They have also left their mark in the musical heritage of the country as a whole. The melody known as Abheri is a contribution of Abhiras and is still current in the North, though it is not very popular but it is very popular in the South by its old name”.

The first mention of raga Abheri we find in Matanga’s “*Brha Deshi*” a very famous book on music. According to Matanga, raga Abheri was one of the derivatives of Pancham raga

Like Abherees the Sythians, whom the Abherees served as soldiers and generals, also gave many ragas to India. These were known as Sakas and we find many ragas with their ending in saga, the corrupted form of the word ‘Saka’ i.e. Rama saga, Lacha saga, Nisa saga, Dev saga, etc. Saka raga which once was a prominent melody with its derivatives, Saka tilk and Sakamisrita, is reminiscent of the Cythian tribe.

Ascending notes: SA, RE, MA, PA, NI, SA

Descending notes: SA, NI, PA, MA, RE, SA

Vadi note: MA

Samvadi note: SA

It evokes enthusiasm, love, warmth, painful yearning, submission and friendliness.

Melody of Repentance (*Sur Leela*)

The Tale

When king Ghiasuddin Balban ruled Delhi (1288-1306), Chanesar, a Rajput king, ruled Sindh with his seat at Debal, the famous seaport of old times. King loved his wife Leela very deeply. His love made her proud, conceited and narcissistic. She was sure of her hold over Chanesar for all her lapses were forgiven by him. Only once he was incensed for her lapse but that too he forgave on his chief minister Jakhro's intercession, who happened to be from the same village to which Leela belonged.

Rai Khangaar, a Rajput ruler of Lakhpatt, was coeval of Chanesar. Kounroo was his daughter. A pampered, haughty and proud girl. She was haughty even with her playmates and considered none of them her equal. And to flaunt her superiority, she had a spinning wheel made of gold, which none of her playmates could afford. Kounroo was betrothed to the brother of her favorite playmate Jammni. Jammni was also distantly related to her. One day Kounroo, in her usual haughty manner, broke Jammni's spinning wheel, who told her off in annoyance, "You behave as if you were a queen of Chanesar"

Kounroo had heard many stories about Chanesar's manly beauty and bravery and now when Jammni taunted her she resolved to marry Chanesar. She told her mother Mirkhee, about her resolution. Mirkhee knew her daughter to be so headstrong and self-willed that any opposition was likely to drive her to suicide. Realizing this she made arrangements and both of them left for Debal, where they met the chief minister, Jakhro. Queen Mirkhi told him the whole story. Jakhro promised to talk to the king at an

opportune moment. And one day, when the king was in a happy mood, the chief minister talked to him about princess Kounroo, who, he said, loved the king madly and earnestly desired to marry him. Chanesar expressed sympathy, said some kind words for her but refused even to meet her. Kounroo was not the type to accept defeat. King's refusal made her more resolute. One day she and her mother, disguising themselves as poor and destitute women, met Leela and told her fabricated stories of their miseries, begging her to shelter them as her maids. Leela was moved and employed them as chief maids. Kounroo was assigned the job of setting Chanesar's bedroom while he was out.

As days passed Leela observed that the behavior and bearing of her two new maids were not like those of her other maids. There was a kind of nobility of manners in their overall behavior. It aroused her curiosity and one day she asked Kounroo as to who she really was. Leela's question brought tears to her eyes. She told her in a choked voice that she was a princess but because of bad luck she and her mother were now maids. She showed her pearls, diamonds and a necklace worth nine lacs. The diamond necklace struck Leela's eyes and she got so dazzled with it that she was prepared to pay any price for it. Kounroo, being clever and cunning, immediately took advantage of the situation and said;

"O queen, the price I will ask you for the necklace, though you are a queen, yet you will not be able to pay."

Kounroo's reply was a challenge to Leela and now it was a matter of prestige for her, so she said:

"Name you price I will pay, on my honor"

"Let me spend one night with Chanesar and the necklace is yours." Kounroo said

Leela was so bewitched with the necklace that she, without caring for the consequences, agreed. When Chanesar learnt about it he was stunned. It was inconceivable that his beloved wife, whom he prized more than any thing in the world, could barter him for a necklace. It disgusted him and filled his heart with abhorrence.

Leela was too pleased with herself to realize the

consequences of what for her was a cheap bargain. The realization that the bargain was in fact very dear came when she received word from Chanesar not to show him her face and leave the palace forthwith. She lamented, sobbed, beseeched her beloved consort for forgiveness but all in vain. She had to leave the palace and go to her parents.

Though Chanesar had turned out Leela, he missed her terribly and her separation tormented him. She had betrayed him, betrayed his trust but still his life without her was impossible.

One day Leela learnt that Chanesar's chief minister, Jakharo wanted to marry a girl related to her, but the parents of the girl were not agreeing to the match as the king, whose chief minister Jakharo was, had ill treated his queen by turning her out. On learning this she decided to intercede for Jakharo as she saw in the match an opportunity of pleasing Chanesar during his sojourn in the bride's village for his chief minister's marriage ceremonies. On her intercession the match was agreed to by the girl's parents.

When the marriage procession neared the bride's village, the young and beautiful girls of the village came forward and greeted the procession with traditional marriage songs and dance. One dancing girl fascinated Chanesar. She was tall, youthful but she had hidden her beautiful face behind a veil, Chanesar was so fascinated with the girl that he gallantly went up and asked the girl to marry him. The girl did not believe her ears. She could not believe that king Chanesar would ask her to marry him. Thus in a state of ecstasy and rapture she took off the veil from her face. Chanesar was wonder struck to see that the girl, who had fascinated him, was none but Leela. Leela's eyes were fixed on his face without blinking. Chanesar held out his arms, she fell in them. Chanesar embraced her with immense love and in a state of ecstasy closed his eyes never to open. Love had united them yet again.

Introduction

While Noori, the heroine of the melody included in this volume i.e. "Melody of Modesty" or Sur Kamoad, is a symbol of humility and bitter awareness of human being as an inherently

sinful and imperfect creature, Leela stands for a haughty, egocentric, self-absorbed, incorrigibly fickle and volatile aspect of woman's character. Her heart rules her head and she easily succumbs to temptation. The object of temptation blinds her so much that she can go to any length to achieve it.

Leela is a queen of queens, swings in cradles and does not bother for any thing. Her friends throng her house and she is received in social festivities with the beating of drums and blowing of flutes. But now she is deserted and desolate. No one comes to her house. Whosoever comes hurts her with taunts. This all happened because she fell victim to temptation. Dazzled by the brilliance of a diamond necklace she bartered her consort:

*As a first lady in the realm of Chanecer,
I was greeted with beating of drums and playing of flutes,
I fell from his grace, loneliness became my lot.*

*

*I rocked in royal swings, unmindful of consequence,
The incident of necklace created an ugly situation,
The beloved parted, putting me in distress.*

Noori is apologetic of her human imperfections whereas Leela is a metaphor of these imperfections. When we meet her she is forsaken by her lover-husband and the poem begins with her lamentations and sobs. Poet steps in, and advises her to make her consort relent with beseeches and entreaties:

*Leela, if you have learnt lesson, give up all scheming,
Roll your headscarf round your neck as a sign of complete
submission,
If you beseech him for forgiveness he will never ask you to
leave.*

*

*If your entreaties can bring your consort back
Placate him with sobs,
Continue your entreaties, this is a place where only
entreaties count.*

*

*If he is not moved by your entreaties, persist in your
entreaties,*

Do not give up hope, the beloved is immensely merciful,

It is Shah's way that he, as the chorus in Greek dramas, particularly in the plays of Sophocles, assumes the role of chorus. He, now and then, comments on the conduct and attitude of the characters, reveals their inner reality, advises them to mend their ways, addresses the reader, brings into perspective the small episodes and incidents, gives his personal views and expresses his spiritual experiences and sufferings in female persona and identity. At places he uses his name such as "thus says Abdul Lateef, "so says Sayyad" hence his name recurs regularly in his poetry.

For Sufis, man, in regard to his relationship with God, is like a woman, deeply loving but erratic, irresolute, and volatile. On the way to his beloved he gets tempted by dazzling brilliance of worldly things, which are in fact delusions. Hence Shah says;

***Bewitched by the diamond you went on to possess the
necklace,
But such temptations have disgraced millions,
The lord turned away his face and you suffered sorrows of
separation.***

*

***Jewels affixed on the necklace, which lured you, were all
fake,
These were, in fact, mere counterfeit beads,
Such delusions and temptations have separated many
from the friend.***

Guilt can be forgiven on true repentance and true resolve never to commit it again. For Sufis when an individual repents his erratic actions, "the remembrance of that action so entirely departs from his heart that there remains in his conscience not a trace of it."

One Sufi said, "The meaning of repentance is that you should repent for repentance."

As in his other poems based on folktales, Shah has dispensed with details of the tale and appropriating some events and motifs has tinted them with colors of his personality, his

worldview and spirituality. In this poem he has focused only on the situation, where Chanesar turns out Leela. As the poem works upwards, we realize that the characters, Leela and Chanesar, are not just folk characters but more than that. They beckon to some deeper reality than that of their own selves. The incident of swapping of her beloved for the diamond necklace also has been so treated as to make it more vibrant and meaningful than the original folktale. Chanesar is exalted from an ordinary king to an almighty king, whose dread pervades all. He is an envious, inflexible and self-willed lord. He does not like the external bedecking, but embellishments of character with simplicity and humility. He knows our thoughts, and desires and wishes of our heart.

*I throw the diamond in flames, necklace in hell,
O damsel, Sayyad says, how can you be at repose?
The king is very possessive and self-willed,
Dread of his reign is all over,
How come you bartered the chieftain, the coolness of your
eyes?*

All these attributes point to some one, whom Chanesar of the folktale symbolizes and impersonates.

In Sufi creed there is no place for despair. Shah, being Sufi, is always optimist. He kindles hope in the hearts of his characters, when they are groping in the darkness of despair and to do that he even changes and twists the tale. True to his vision, he ends his poems on a hopeful note:

*Leela, do not grieve so much, get up, clean your courtyard,
Offer yourself and all your ancestors as sacrifice to your
beloved.*

*

*Leela, do not writhe in pain, grieve not, get up, sweep your
courtyard,
The consort has come to the abode of a lowly person like
you.*

Melody of Odyssey of Self Redemption (*Sur Moomal Rano*)

The Tale

Once upon a time a Gujjar Rajpoot king, Raja Nando, ruled over upper Sindh from his capital at Mirpur Mathelo. The king had nine daughters two of whom were Moomal and Soomal. While Moomal was a paragon of beauty, Soomal was intelligent and clever. The king had a great treasure, the worry of safety of which had made his life difficult. He had fears that some powerful king might attack him and deprive him of his treasure. One day he happened to discover a pig-tooth containing magical power. When he put the tooth in a stream, the water receded showing the bottom. This gave him an idea. He immediately brought his treasure and with the help of the magic fang, buried it in the bottom of the stream. He was happy that no one would ever learn about his treasure. But one magician, however, learnt about the treasure and the secret of the fang. Disguising himself as a beggar he came to Raja's palace and begged for alms. Moomal sent him alms but he refused to accept saying that he would accept alms only when Moomal herself gave it to him. Moomal took him for a saintly ascetic and came to give him alms. The beggar pretending to be ill said that there is no remedy for his illness except the fang that was in Moomal's possession. She was surprised to hear about the fang from the ascetic, as no one knew about it except she and her father. She thus took him for a saint who would divine secrets. She gave the fang to the beggar without hesitation being unaware of its importance and the beggar went away.

One day the king wanted to check if his treasure was intact. He asked for the fang and when he learnt that Moomal had given it to a beggar he got mad. Soomal pacified him and promised to accumulate more treasure than the one he had lost.

Moomal's beauty was known all over the region and every prince wished to marry her. Soomal decided to exploit Moomal's beauty for amassing the wealth she had promised her father. She learnt sorcery and built a magic palace on the bank of Kaak rivulet. She laid a clever maze in the palace and placed roaring and thundering wild beasts at corners, all born of her sorcery. Then she proclaimed, far and wide, that whoever would cross the maze and reach Moomal he could marry her. On hearing this news, many princes with precious diamonds and jewelry, came to try their luck and win the beautiful bride but none crossed the maze and in the attempt lost all their wealth. Some of them felt so humiliated that they did not return to their homes and became ascetics.

One day Hameer the ruler of Umerkot went for hunting along with his ministers, all intelligent, courageous and young. Raano Mendhero, who was his brother-in-law also, was one of them. Raano was more clever and courageous than his companions. During hunting in the jungle they met a young handsome ascetic. They talked to him and in the course of conversation he told them his story. He was a prince and learning about Moomal's beauty he also had tried his luck to win her but did not succeed and losing all his wealth he became ascetic. He described Moomal's celestial beauty in such a way that they yearned to see her and win her. So they went straight to the Kaak rivulet. Hameer, being the ruler, made first attempt but failed. Then attempted his two ministers. They also failed. Now it was Raano's turn. He being more clever and courageous than his companions, succeeded in crossing the magical maze and reaching Moomal's chamber. Thus he won Moomal. She also liked him and both were married. Raano stayed one night with her and next day went back to his friends. Raano's success made Hameer jealous. Being the ruler he ordered him to leave Moomal and accompany him to Umerkot. Raano had to obey him. When they reached Umerkot Hameer commanded him not

to leave Umerkot and be present in his court from morning till evening. Raano obeyed his master's orders. But when night set in, his craving for Moomal made him restless and he secretly rode on a camel and reached Kaak, spent night with Moomal and came back to Umerkot before dawn. This became his routine. Hameer, however, learnt of it and put him in prison. Moomal waited for her spouse but he did not come. Many days passed. She became so desperate that she asked her sister Soomal to dress up like Raano and share bed with her and thus console her aching heart.

On the other side Raano's sister, who was Hameer's wife, begged Hameer to release her brother. Hameer acceded to her request and ordered Raano's release. Raano immediately rushed to meet Moomal. But as he reached Kaak palace he was stunned to see Moomal sleeping with another man. He drew his sword to kill both but changed his mind and left Moomal to be punished by her conscience and ignominy. While leaving, he left his riding cane beside her bed. On seeing it in the morning, Moomal realized as to what had happened. Moomal made all efforts to dispel his misunderstanding but all was in vain. Seeing no other way she disguised herself as a male ascetic and journeyed to Umerkot where she soon won her way into Raano's favor. She pretended to be a hermit skilled in throwing dice. One day Raano discovered that she was Moomal. He left her and went away. Raano's attitude made her so desperate that she got a pyre made, set it on fire and threw herself on it. When Raano learnt of it, he repented his misunderstanding and callousness, and rushed to the spot but only to see Moomal burning. He also threw himself in the fire and perished beside his beloved.

Introduction

In this long poem Shah has created a world of beauty and love, wrapped in an aura of fragrance and colors. While reading the poem, one feels various fragrances and colors exuding from the verses. In this world of beauty and color we meet beautiful virgin princesses dressed in green gorgeous robes, their bodies glittering like gold and back-knot hair scented with musk. They have washed their beautiful virgin bodies with sandalwood and

amber. When they wash their hair with water of the Kaak rivulet, the bumblebees, mistaking the water for flowers, dash in the water:

As the vistas of the poem opens, we meet the hero of the tale Raano along with his friends meeting an ascetic in a jungle. The ascetic was once a prince but for the love of Moomal he had renounced the princely life and become an ascetic. He is clad in a saffron robe, a turban of shreds is on his head and a rosary is glittering around his neck. His face is glowing like full moon. Some times his countenance blazes like a rising sun. His whole body is smeared with ash. The beauty of Moomal has given him an aura of beatitude.

*The ascetic burnished all over with love,
He was born as moth, ablaze like sun,
He came to banks of Kaak and got crimsoned by the
maidens.*

*

*Yesterday we met an ascetic smeared with dung-ash,
Green shawl on his shoulders, golden rosary around his
neck:
Tell us about Moomal's deluding allure.*

On hearing Moomal's name he got enraptured, tears trickled down his eyes. It seemed that talking of Moomal had reopened his wounds:

*The begging ascetic got rapturous in wilderness,
Talking about Kaak tears trickled down his eyes,
Some sharp point pricked his heart, his healed wounds
seemed to open up..
And in that rapturous state he thus described Moomal's
beauty.*

*

*The Kaak banks, where maidens wash their scented hair,
There bumblebees come lured and fall into the so perfumed
water,
Inhaling the perfumes the gallant lovers are smitten with
love and shed tears of blood.*

*

*As are the red roses, so are their dresses,
Their back-knot hair is soaked with jasmine oil,
There are cries of exultation all over,
Sayyad says, perceiving their beauty one feels stings of
love,
Seeing their attire, onlookers are tongue-tied*

*

*Gold-bodied Gujjar maidens play with silver,
Aloe burns in parlors, beds smell of musk,
They bath with tray-full of ambergris,
Gallant lovers, standing two abreast, are afire perceiving
such beauty,
Lateef says, they became ascetics for seeing the beloved,
The Kaak-crimsoned ascetics are about to come.*

And thus the ascetic jolted them, perplexed them, and showed them a place, where streams of love were flowing:

*The ascetic jolted and perplexed us,
There is limitless love in the outskirts of Ludaano,
If you ride up there, you will find overflowing streams of
love,*

*

*Let us get on the Kaak landing, where love erupts in
waves,
There is no restrain of any sort, everyone can perceive
beloved.*

For a Sufi, the fundamental factor underlying all Divine manifestations is love and love is the supreme purpose of existence. But love has no intrinsic value. There is something beyond love which is love's inmost cause and that cause is beauty. Having heard about Moomal's beauty, they give up every thing and ride their camels to Kaak. They urge their camels to speed up and reach the place where:

*Walnuts, grapes, fine branches of sandalwood,
Musk and lotus flowers abound untouched,
Even bumblebees have not hovered around them,*

***Stride along so that we may perceive maidens and lotuses
of Kaak.***

The mundane beauty of Moomal and her sisters purifies them, sublimates them and takes them beyond themselves and they become aware of beauty which is reflected in mundane beauty. And in this state of awareness all the mundane beauty, the magical palace, the maid Naater who used to lead the suitors through magical Kaak to Moomal, all become meaningless. And leaving all of them behind they transcend themselves:

***Leaving Kaak at corner, they transcended themselves,
What can Naater¹ do to them who had gone beyond
Lodaano,***

*

***Kaak did not stop Lahootis², palaces did not seduce them,
Mistresses and maids failed to bridle them
The divines left behind millions like them.***

It is now Raano's love that sublimates Moomal and Raano himself becomes symbol of the one who is elusive and hard to pin down and all things become nonexistent except Raano. He is everywhere. The place where Moomal used to lure the princes by making her back-knot hair scented with musk, now there is only love. She had wounded many with her beauty it is now she who is wounded. Raano pierced her heart with darts of love:

***The Gujjar-girl had wounded many, now it is she who is
wounded,
It is Raano, who pierced her heart with a love dart.***

*

***Raano's countenance is matchless, more elegant than any
one else's,***

Lateef says, he came and applied red hue of Ludano and dyed Moomal red.

Now there is no other utterance, all is Mendharo³.

¹ Name of Moomal's clever maid who used to mislead the suitors

² divines

*He strained bow of love,
Many celebrities gave up their claim,
There is nothing else, all is Mendharo,*

Discarding all the details of the tale poet describes Moomal's pangs of separation and the agony of the ignominy, which her beloved brought her by doubting her fidelity. Shah has expressed Moomal's sufferings and agony in about 93 stanzas with a highly poetic skill:

*I kept the candle burning till rays of sun appeared,
Come back Mendhra, for God's sake, I am dying,
Yearning and longing for you, I flew crows of Kaak.*

*

*As I stood waiting, stars appeared and then disappeared,
All night I was on the watch out for Mendhro and his
camel,
Tears were flowing down my cheeks when the sun rays
appeared.*

*

*I kept burning lamps of flower-oil till call for dawn
prayer sounded,
I don't know why Dholo stayed in Dhutt⁴.
Mount your camel, come, my love,
I have flown crows of Kaak in all directions to bring
tiding of your coming.*

*

*Turning up the wick consumed all oil in the lamp,
Come back my love riding your camel,
Night passed crying for Raano.*

*

*Pleiades faded out while triple stars arose,
Raano did not come and his time of coming is past,
Damn the wretched night that passed without beloved,
Raano is resting in Dhutt leaving me in woe*

³ Raano's countenance is matchless, though there are other Sodas also

⁴ one part of Thar is called Dhutt

Sufi always lives in hope. He believes that one day his self will return to the Universal Self from whom his self is separated and will unite with him never to separate. And to inculcate hope in Moomal who is engulfed with despair, Shah, contrary to the original tale, introduces a new character of an ascetic who brings tidings of Raano's coming:

*An ascetic came from Raano's converse,
The divine radiated like a full moon,
And dispelled all darkness with his radiant self.*

*

*An ascetic came from Raano's converse,
The whole vicinity became fragrant,
A truly accomplished ascetic has come from there*

*

*Raano sent you a camel-riding messenger,
Lateef says, perceive the handsome one coming from
Ludano
His camel will enter Kaak early in the morning.,*

*

*New message came from Raano last night,
Lateef says, we have received gift from the Munificent,
Caste, creed and breed, are not queried, whoever comes
finds acceptance.*

Shah has thus spelled out his mystic view that pain is the path that leads to the beloved. Pain and sufferings purge the seeker. He is transcended and leaving behind the mundane beloved he becomes aware of the real Beloved. And thus acquires union with Him. This union is not actual meeting with the Beloved but becoming aware of the relationship that existed between him and the Beloved even before the creation of the universe. He only becomes aware of it and thus the seeker and the sought become one. Every thing that exists is in the Beloved. He radiates all over in the universe. The magical palace is with in the seeker not outside. Thus Moomal's sufferings lead her to catharsis, her inner self is crystallized, the mist is dispelled and she perceives that the real Raano radiates everywhere:

*Wherever may I ride my camel, it is radiance all around,
Within me is crimson Kaak within me is brilliant
Ludaano,
All is Raano, there is nothing but Raano.*

*

*Wherever may I drive my camel, it is splendor all around,
With in me is crimson Kaak, with in me is the spring
garden,
There is no talk but of Raano.*

The poem is the spiritual pilgrimage of the seeker through the dark night of anguish and is thus the redemptive odyssey.

Melody of Chastity (*Sur Umer-Marui*)

The tale

In the reign of Umer Soomro there lived in Maleer, a village in Thar, the south-eastern sandy region of Sindh, a goatherd by the name of Palni. He and his wife Madohi made a simple living by grazing their stock and tilling a small piece of land with the help of sharecropper called Phog. The couple was childless after much praying and yearning a daughter was born to them, who was named Maarui. She grew up in a very beautiful maiden. Her beauty captivated many a young man in and around the village. Phog was one of them. When his suit for her hand in marriage was rejected by her parents because she was already betrothed to her cousin Khetsen, he felt slighted. Disgruntled, he made his way to Umerkot. When he managed to have an audience with the Potentate. He charmed him with an eloquent description of Maarui's beauty. Umer was so bewitched that he mounted his fine and fast camel and seating Phog behind him headed in the direction of Maleer, which was some 75 miles away. The sun had traveled up in the sky when they reached outskirts of the village. Phog took the disguised ruler to the village well, where the village women came in groups to fill their earthen pitchers after sunrise. The two men hid themselves behind a thicket of bushes near the well to wait for Maarui. Groups of women came, took water and left. At long last Maarui also came with another girl. As soon as they filled their pitchers, Umer came out of his hiding place, and, approaching Maarui, who had been pointed out to him by Phog, asked for water to quench his thirst. While he knelt with his palms forming a bowl to hold water, she bent over to pour water from her pitcher. As she did so, Umer folded his

arms around her waist, carried her to his waiting camel, and seating him in front of himself drove away as fast as the mount could go to his fortress at Umerkot where a protracted ordeal began for both the abductor and the abductee. For Umer because all his persuasions to win her over were coming to naught and for Maarui because succumbing to his persuasions would have gone against her grain. Umer tried every temptation even a little coercion, to make her consent to marry him. He offered her to make her his first lady, to clothe her in silks and brocades, to adorn her with pearls and jewels, to feed her rich and delicious foods, to unlock all his treasures for her, all offers were disdained. Chagrined, he put her in chains, manacled her. She did not waver. How could she as love of her people and their way, her fiancée, and her native place Maleer, was in her blood. What the king did not try was brute force for it could have gone against his grain. For love is love when it is freely given and not forcibly taken. The year long war of nerves were finally won by the meek and weak, the high and the mighty had to give way. Umer was moved by her rock-like resolve, and dauntless spirit. Declaring her to be her sister, he had her chains and manacles removed and wounds treated. While she recovered herself, he sent for her folks to take her back.

Thus she was returned to where she belonged---to her Maleer, to her kinsmen and herdsmen, and to her fiancé. All were overjoyed except his fiancé. He had doubts that she was no longer chaste and untouched. She had to prove her innocence as such she went through the ancient rite of holding a red hot iron in her hand and came out of it unscathed. Her chastity having been established, she took her marital vows with Khetsen, and lived as the saying goes, happily ever after.¹ The Soomro dynasty is said to have ruled Southern Sindh during 11th to 14th centuries of the Christian era. According to Mir Ali Sher Quni's

¹ Its old name was Amerkot. According to Mr. Todd (*Rajasthan vol ii*, page 234) the town was founded in the 11th century A.D. Amersingh Rajput of the Permar dynasty, and Umer Soomro after whose name it was renamed, appeared on the scene some two centuries later, could not have hand in the town's founding (Source: Hotchand Gurbakhshani in his compilation of *Shah-jo-Risalo* (page 684)

chronicle, Tuhfat-ul-Kiram (767 AD), Umer Soomro, also called Hameer Soomro, reigned from 1355 to 1390 AD.

Introduction

This tale is a story of eternal conflict between evil and good and, though it does not happen in the callous world of reality, it happens in poetry and fiction, that good triumphs over evil and poetic justice is done! In this tale also good prevails over evil and an autocrat ruler surrenders before the unshakable resolution of the meek, humble; and unprotected girl; and she eventually returns home untouched. The heroine of the tale Marui stands for good and virtue and Umer the ruler represents evil. Weaving his poem around these two characters Shah Lateef takes us on a multi-trek course across the sandy landscape of Thar, the locale where the action takes place. Along one trek, through the eyes and mouth of Maarui we see and hear what sort of life the poor and simple people of Thar lead, a life that is typical of desert herdsmen, agrarians and nomads, because rains are scant, irregular and erratic. When a couple of dry years string together, they are forced to leave their hearths and homes for wherever it rains, wherever there is pasturage for their herds, work for themselves and a little open space for their makeshift abodes.

*Shifting from Kharoooria they proceeded to Wareejhap,
Sayyad says: it was only yesterday that my relatives were
here,
Seeing their deserted abodes tears trickle down,
My home landers have gone far away,
Whom should I reproach for forgetting me.*

*

*Contented with meager food they are strong and
steadfast in virtue,
They move about, their dust smeared bodies wrapped in
coarse shawls,
Go and ask in Maleer about their virtue.*

*

*Big and small baskets on heads, they come perspiring,
Heels dust-laden and feet sweat-soaked,
I identified them from their gait, it being their peculiarity.*

*

*Blessed is that watering place where thirsting herds come,
My mates collected Duth, stacked it in courtyards,
Remembering all this my heart grieves in gazebos every
day,*

*

*They sank wells in the desert to ruminants,
Women come at dawn to draw water from three hundred
foot deep wells,
Filling their leather buckets they stride away laughing,
My love for my people increases day by day.*

But when the rains fall in Thar, the life of these desert-dwellers undergoes a happy change and we get glimpses of their life in rainy season. Winter is over, it has rained in Maleer and the herdsmen smile. The mates of Marui are sheering sheep and spinning wool in the presence of their consorts. They have no worry of any sort. They are manufacturing shawls and starching clothes. Wild creepers and trees have blossomed. They bring basketsful of desert grain and fill up their home granaries. Every one freely tastes wild desert fruit and their huts are seen everywhere in the plains and on the dunes. The desert is all verdant and no young girl stays in home in this joyous season. They go out and bring plenty of grains and vegetables. Water is abundant and is available to them even in their huts. Describing their happy life in rainy season she contrasts it with her miserable predicament. She feels as if she were on spikes without them and suffocating in the mansions of palace and weeps all the time:

*The herdsmen smiled, spring breezes blew,
Sayyad says, I remember them, their cattle track, and
enclosures,
My charming consort might have built huts near some
dunes.*

*

*The herdsmen smiled as spring winds brought rains,
O Umer, I have learnt about that land from the Duth-
sustainer,*

*Where creepers, trees and bushes have bloomed,
They put basketsful of Trooh in mangers,
Every one freely tastes desert fruits and honey,
Marui will hardly stay in mansion; she will ultimately go
to Maleer.
As they while starch their clothes Maarui's mates say:
"we want Marui in Maleer"*

*

*The herdsmen smiled as spring winds brought rains,
O Umer, I have learnt about that land from the Duth-
sustainer,
Where creepers, trees and bushes have bloomed,
They put basketsful of Trooh in mangers,
Every one freely tastes desert fruits and honey,
Marui will hardly stay in mansion, she will ultimately go
to Maleer.*

Our poet idealizes their simple living and innocent life, glorifies their hard labor and transmutes their hard life and poverty into spirituality. The poem reminds us the poetic genre called pastorals meaning that which pertains to shepherds. It was an important literary mode concerning lives of shepherds and came into vogue three hundred years before Christ. In pastorals life of shepherds was idealized, and an image of a peaceful and uncorrupted existence was created. Shepherd's life was a paradigm of tranquility and harmonious love. For William Blacke, the shepherd was a symbol of an innocent and unspoiled way of life; and for Wordsworth the countryside, unblemished nature and the uncorrupted existence of countrymen were in many ways ideal. The shepherd was called the noble savage, the cultural primitive living in wild woods, who was isolated from hypocritical town life and was preferable to those, who live under the base laws of servitude. He is a child of nature and 'symbolizes the untainted and simple virtues of a persona unsullied by decadent civilization.'

This poem has the full apparatus of epic and can easily be categorized as an epic. One of the elements of epic is that 'it aspires to grandeur of no common sort, it aspires to a state

where man transcends his human limitations and, for a time at least, becomes more obviously in the image of God-like creatures.' This poem, in its range and magnitude, its theme and grandiose treatment, can be classified as an epic. Not an epic of chivalry but an epic of human dignity, determination, virtue, chastity, and patriotism. Maarui is an epitome of virtue and embodiment of morality. She seeks moral values and also lays them down. Seeing her in her perfection one feels man's hunger for perfection, which he fails to achieve in practical life, and satisfies it by creating perfect characters like Maarui. This poem has much resemblance with the renowned Indian epic Ramayana and the character of Maarui parallels to that of Sita. In fact Sita is the role model out of which copies are made; she is, therefore, a prototype. Besides solidarity of characters there are similarities in events of the epic and the folk tale Umer-Maarui. In Ramayana Sita was kidnapped by Ravana though a demon, he did not forcefully outrage her modesty. In the same way Umer, the villain of the tale, kidnaps Maarui, lures her to succumb to his wishes and even puts chains on her but he does not molest her, which he could easily do with a weak, lone and helpless girl. After release from Ravana, Sita was disclaimed because she had lived under the roof of another man. And to prove her innocence she threw herself in a funeral pyre. As she was innocent, fire did not harm her. Similarly when Maarui returned to her kinsmen, her beloved fiancé Khetsen, whom she was dying to meet, doubted her chastity. She proved her innocence by holding red-hot iron bar in her hands, which did not harm her. In fact it is a national epic of Sindheans in the true sense of the term and reflects their aspirations, inspirations and idealism. Maarui's character bears two bright qualities, one is of patriotism and the other is of her strength of character, integrity; and spirit of resistance. The character of Sita has tremendously influenced Indian women. In the same way Marui's character has immensely influenced Sindhi women. Her unwavering and unshakable determination not to be lured into surrender has influenced them, their feelings, thoughts, and conduct. Maarui has set up the ideal of womanhood, which Sindhi women aspire to follow, and thus has ennobled their souls. She has also

inculcated in them the spirit to go through all trials and tribulations, bear any persecution but not to give up their ideals. In Sindhi literature Maarui is a living symbol of patriotism. She loves her homeland and her love knows no bounds. She loves her desert people, desert itself, its plains, sand dunes, huts and sheds, grains, vegetables and their poverty. They are contented with their meager sources of livelihood. They are poor but are strong and steadfast in virtues. Their bodies are smeared with dust but their souls are clean like crystals. They do not hoard food; they gather only that much food as is sufficient for them for a day. We see images of their laborious life. They are working in fields, their feet dust-laden, bodies drenched with sweat, big and small baskets on their heads, and she identifies them by their peculiar gait:

*My happy herdsmen are always plentiful,
They pick and bring branch of Daunro cook its grain,
Those who rely on woods are never lean.*

*

*Contented with meager food they are strong and steadfast
in virtue,
They move about, their dust smeared bodies wrapped in
coarse shawls,
Go and ask in Malir about their virtue.*

*

*No restrain, no restriction, no tax in Thar,
They pluck red flowers and fill cattle mangers,
Peerless are Maroo, joyous is their Malir.*

*

*Crops ripened for harvest on their own unwatched,
unhedged,
Maleer is very spacious for my mates to move about,
The one whose kinsmen are in plains, don't lock up her in
mansion here,
Those who yearn for Aaraar, remove their iron chains.*

Her love for land is one of its kind and it is rare that we come across such unique love in world literature. She beseeches Umer that if she cannot go to her homeland while she is alive,

her dead body should be sent to her parental place and the cool earth of her homeland may be spread on her dead body, she should be buried in her ancestral graveyard and fragrances of the creepers of her homeland may be offered to her, and though she will be dead, she will be enlivened:

*Pining for my homeland if I die,
Do not let my body remain in prison,
Do not keep this outlander away from her beloved,
Spread the cool earth of desert on my dead body
Take my body to Malir in last throes of my life.*

*

*Pining for my homeland if I die,
Take my dead body to my homeland,
Let me be buried beside my herdsmen in Thar,
I will be alive in death if my dead body were sent to
Maleer.*

She symbolizes those bonds and social structure, which involve continuity, responsibility, rules, and respect for tradition. The brighter aspect of her personality is that she does not dissolve in a puddle of self-pity, but resists with spirit, humility and capacity to bear persecution and temptation. This trait of her personality is a cherished part of Sindhi womanhood.

*Let my face be dirty O, Soomra,
Lest Maroo say that I washed it in palaces.*

*

*If you tear my skin and put salt on it,
My folks have never committed such an unworthy act,
Every breath of my life is steeped in the love of my
herdsmen.*

*

*I will never ever accept any consort other than my shawl
wearer, who is matchless,
If he is shabby even then he is mine as he dwells in my
heart.*

Though the desert dwellers are contented people, abduction of Maarui has put them in perpetual fear. It has created panic

among desert women and dread and sense of insecurity among the men. Women have given up visiting wells and are so frightened that they never go out without their husbands. The wells are deserted, no sound of giggling of girls at dawn is heard, and ropes with which water is drawn lie scorched near the wells. Even bleats of goat and sound of wheel are not heard:

*Learning about my kidnap the virtuous girls ceased
coming to wells,*

No desert woman had ever been held captive,

Why didn't I die before hearing taunts of my people.

*

*Those who chatted at dawn their voices are heard no
more,*

*Who used to come to draw water now sleep beside their
husbands,*

*Water drawing rope is lying scorched on either sides of
wells.*

*

*All do not sleep, some still come to draw water from
wells,*

*Perhaps only those mates, who while grazing ruminants,
get thirsty.*

*

*Neither even a bleat of goat, nor is heard a sound of draw-
wheel,*

O Lord, I am witnessing dry troughs near wells,

*Where are those who draw water from three hundred foot
deep wells?*

*Probably they have pulled down their huts and migrated
somewhere else.*

*

*Having drawn water from wells again and again, they
coiled the ropes and went away,*

I am worried about those herdsmen O Lord,

*They, their creepers and trees, glitter in my mind all the
time.*

The herdsmen were so frightened that they dare not complain to the king for the injustice he had done to them. Maarui takes their fear as their annoyance with her for preferring palaces to their huts. They, not knowing her agony, think that she is happy in royal mansions. She is in a curious predicament. On one side are the reproaches of her kinsmen and on other side are pestering of Umer

*Had they cared, the captive would not have minded
captivity,
Probably they have forgotten me completely.*

*

*Other prisoners are in peace; it is only she that flutters in
chains,
Sword of her beloved kinsmen hangs all the time over her.*

*

And our poet summing up their condition says:

*If those on whose dependence they live, become
plunderers,
Then how long the desert dwellers would stay in desert?*

*

*If those who are a prop and protection of people, turn out
to be plunderers,
To whose door the poor desert dwellers will bewail?*

The torture that this innocent desert damsel undergoes agitates reader's mind and he tends to ask as to why an innocent girl suffers and is punished without committing any wrong. The immediate answer to this question is that it all happens because the social system based as it is on the principle of "might is right" is unjust. But religious scholars have different answer to give. The religious doctrines tell us that those who suffer have committed sin wittingly or unwittingly and suffering is the natural consequence of their sin and thus by committing sin they draw punishment. The other justification, which the religious scholars put forward to justify unfair and unmerited sufferings, is that God tests the sufferer and eventually rewards him. Whatever reason we may put forward but the fact remains that there is no rational reason for human sufferings except that we

live in a social system, which does not give protection to the weak and cannot hold back the strong persecuting the weak. Besides there is no reason for suffering, it simply is, because it is a part of life.

Umer is an autocrat monarch and hence is above all morality. And the philosophers who were courtiers of kings, justified their autocracy and declared them above moral laws saying that moral laws are an invention of the weak to chain the strong, a way of restraining the extraordinary man within limits and capabilities of the mediocre, the average. They even proclaimed that justice is what suits the strong. But there were certain thinkers who said that man is a social animal. He has individual instincts for self-preservation as well as social instincts of group and race preservation and that his social instincts are stronger than self-preservation instincts. He has inherited these social instincts, and carries sociability in his blood along with the individual instinct of self-preservation. He is well aware that individual's survival does not come by individual power but by group coherence and ability. Francis Bacon in his book 'Advancement of Learning' says, "All things are endued with an appetite of two kinds of good---one that this thing is whole in itself, the other as it is part of some greater whole and this latter is more worthy and more powerful than the other as it tends to the conservation of a more ample form."

Umer is a man for whom the thing that is whole in itself is better than the thing that is part of some greater whole whereas Maarui stands for the thing that is part of the greater whole. She is upholder of social morality. Her morality is not religious and theological but secular and social morality. She, while refusing to surrender, does not refer to religious injunctions but to social customs and conventions. As such she is an upholder of convention and conservatism. She will not cast away her shawl, the symbol of her modesty, because it is not the way of desert girls to do so. It is not the way of herdsmen to exchange their dear ones with gold and she will not break their tradition. The desert girls never wear silk dresses and when they are betrothed, black cotton threads are tied around their wrists and those threads are more precious than gold for them.

*Herdswomen never wears silk garments,
When they embroider their shawls they look more
beautiful than in silk clothing,
Their rough woolen shawls are far better than brocade,
I prefer rough blanket to the saffron cloth,
I will be ashamed to cast away the shawl that my elders
have given me.*

*

*Costly woolen cloth and brocade I will never wear,
Stole made of costly silk drenched with amber I hate,
Would that I were to enjoy milky white blankets with my
beloved Maroo,
I thirst for my herdsman beloved.*

*

*The cotton threads tied by Maroo around my wrist, are
more valuable than gold,
As such don't offer to herdsman silk garments, O
Umer!
Superior is each thread of the shawl that my elders have
given me.*

*

*It is not the way of herdsmen to give up their kinsmen for
gold,
I will not break my herdsmen's tradition in Umerkot,
And will not exchange my love of huts with love of
palatial mansions.*

She trusts life and her trust is rooted in her belief in God and faith in human potential. And she, observing the helplessness and insecurity, and vanity of human efforts to evade what has happened to her, imputes every happening to fate and destiny. It is her destiny that she is kidnapped; it is her destiny that she is suffering tortures, and pangs of separation from her beloved, her parents and her native land. But even in this human predicament she does not give up hope. She believes that one day or the other she will return to the land and the people she belongs to. With this hope in tomorrow she is restored to herself and she finds strength to renew her life after

sufferings. She is all alone in the prison with shackles and chains and there is no one to help her but she is optimistic and hopes that this dry season will pass and there will be rain. The Taro bird twitters and predicts rainfall, the days of union are nearing, we will meet o beloved!

*In this rainy season cheerful herdsmen take out their herds,
They drive their small cattle towards plain to nurture them,
Remembering all this my eyes shed tears,
Come, o my friend, the Tara bird twitters predicting rain.*

*

*In this season cheerful herdsmen live by making thorny hedges around their huts,
Water is in abundance and they easily get it in their cottages,
Lateef says: - Maarui is in chains and they are happy in Khaaur,
Every one will eat Khaboota fruit; it will rain, come, o beloved.*

*

*In this season the cheerful herdsmen are jubilant in their homeland,
But, Lateef says, Maarui is in chains in the fort,
Cucumber is in plenty in Maleer, it will rain, come o beloved.*

*

*In this season cheerful herdsmen are leading prosperous life in Jiyai,
Lateef says: they graze their cattle and bridle them there,
They take their cattle to Katai, it will rain come o beloved.*

Though no messenger has come from her kinsmen but she is positive that some one will come and she intuits his coming.

*

A herdsman from Malir entered my abode,

*Now that my supporters have taken care of me the
oppressors have weakened.*

*

*Happiness on messenger's face, and dust of my homeland
on his feet,
Any message of love from the herdsmen?
I extremely yearn for the spinning shed as well as
homeland
For me the dust of my homeland on your feet is musk.*

*

*On what watering place are my herdsmen, and at what
places rains fell on them?
Come sit with me and tell me about my dear ones,
I starve for them and their message will enliven me.*

*

Our poet is a poet of hope and gives hope to his characters
in the midst of despair:

*Weep not, cry not, and shed not tears,
You have been set free, burn all your chains,
O you herds' girl, you will reach your kinsmen very soon.*

*

*Weep not, cry not, shed not tears,
Pass days as they are,
O desert damsel, happiness will follow the sufferings,
Lateef says: see your chains have been removed,
Burn all the chains, you are set free.*

*

*Weep not, cry not, scream not,
Much valiant youths will come there when it will rain,
The Lord will unite you during rains fall, o Maarui.*

In melodrama the heroine is luminously good and the villain is extravagantly wicked. But the soil of Sindh is such that Umer the villain is not the archetype villain of deeper and dark dye. Under the layer of his wickedness lies goodness, which eventually rises to the surface. He uses all methods to win her over and obtain her consent to marry her but does not molest

her; it is because of inherent goodness in his nature. And in the end he shows grace and goodness and sends her back and thus turns the extravagant tale of wickedness into a good and happy tale.

At places the poem appears to be a spiritual allegory. It is said that the term allegory is derived from Greek word *allegoria* meaning "speaking otherwise". This poem, like all allegorical poems, has double meaning: a primary or surface meaning; and secondary or under-surface meaning, a similitude of a spiritual journey through trials and tribulations, eventual liberation and union with the Beloved. The poem has richly detailed surface but at the same time the surface is so thin that we can discern through the surface all the connotations, suggestions and implications. Some writers have likened such literature with China Lamp which, when unlit shows London and when lit shows the Great Fire of London. "The lamp alight is the combination of internal and external, glowing at the imagination as one². The symbolism of the poem is interpreted differently by different scholars. Some interpret it as an attempt to poeticize the battle between the forces of good and evil in the human soul and an exteriorization of the inward spiritual struggle; man's need of salvation and the temptations which beset him in his pilgrimage through life to death. Some interpret it that the imprisonment of Maarui is the imprisonment of human soul in body. Umer is the lower soul (nafs), whose aim is to mislead the seeker to the wrong path. But the true seeker symbolized by Maarui, being aware of the ways of the lower self, rejects its every temptation and it happens that the lower soul gives up all its vile scheming, surrenders, and ceases to tempt the seeker. Maarui, the symbol of pure soul, longs for its original unity and abode and she ultimately attains it.

All great literature is multidimensional, containing many implications, connotations and layers of meaning. And this uniqueness makes that literature relevant to all ages. Every age interprets its implications according to its own socio-economic and political perspectives. And only that literature lives in new

² An Introduction to Literature - Eudora Welty

age, which answers the questions of that age and if it fails it is buried in libraries. Though this poem has religious thrust, it has secular connotations as well and thus it can be interpreted in modern perspective also. According to modern interpretation of the poem Maarui stands for modern Sindh, which is kidnapped, captured; and chained. Maroos represent the natives of Sindh. As Maarui's people overlooked her kidnapping and no one came to her rescue, so have done the natives of Sindh. They have not cared for their Maarui Sindh. It is Sindh that voices her miseries through Maarui.

Melody of Humility (*Sur Kaamoad*)

The tale

Jam Tamachi was king of Sindh. His seat of throne was at Thatta, the famous historical city of Sindh and a center of learning and culture. Near the city was a beautiful lake with exquisite environment around. The king used to visit the lake for hunting and recreation. On the banks of the lake was a small village of fishermen who earned their livelihood by catching and selling fish. They were poor people and were passing hard life. One day Jam Tamachi, along with his courtesans and courtiers, camped on the bank of the lake for hunting, fishing and merry making. With arrival of the king the whole vicinity wore a look of festivity. King was busy all day long in hunting and at nights the atmosphere was filled with sweet songs of singing girls and rhythm of dancing damsels.

One night Jam, tired of the monotony of merry making, came out of camp and began sauntering on the bank all alone. Moon was full, night was cool and calm, the rippling of waves sounded like a dreamy music, and lotuses near the bank looked like babies in the lap of Mother Lake who was rocking them to the lullaby of rippling waves. Suddenly there appeared a solitary boat near the bank. When the boat came near, the king saw a lone beautiful fisher girl, clad in rags, fishing. The king had seen most beautiful princesses, voluptuous dancing and singing girls, but he had never seen such a beauty. It was not a human beauty but a luster of divine flame. On seeing the prince, the girl drew black veil over her radiant face and rowed away, leaving the king in bewilderment. She was Noori, the fisher girl, and a beauty born among the ugly and filthy people. She was

like a lotus flower which grows from mud but opens its blossoms when it rises above the surface of the muddy water and is unsullied by the things that nourish it. This flash of divine beauty enraptured the king and made him restless. He wanted to have that beauty regardless of any thing.

When the king came back to his queens they found him pensive and melancholic. They tried all their charms to make him happy but in vain. Neither the royal beauty of his queens nor sumptuous bodies of dancing girls made him happy. All the time the inextinguishable flame of divine beauty glowed in his soul.

One day the king, as if in a trance, rode to fishermen's village and stayed there in the filthy and dirty village of the fishermen. He forgot his throne, his beautiful queens and all kingly luxuries and became one with them. He asked about the girl and learnt that she was the daughter of a fisherman named Keenjher. He immediately sent for girl's parents and asked Noori's hand in marriage. The poor folk could not even imagine that their daughter would be married with a king. They readily agreed and the king made Noori his queen.

Noori was now a queen but she never forgot as to who she really was, just a fisher girl! The other queens, who were from royal families, looked down upon her but she was humble with them and behaved as if she were their slave. Noticing his queens' attitude to Noori, the king decided to show to them that, besides her divine beauty, Noori had other qualities also, which they all lacked. So he sent a word to all the queens to dress up and put on jewelry and dresses becoming of queens. He would take the one on a ride who had dressed up most beautifully. Hearing the king's word, all the queens embellished themselves elaborately but, contrary to all, Noori wore the dress she had worn at the time when the king had seen her first. When the king came in the palace he saw his queens elaborately decked with pearls, diamonds, jewels and gorgeous dresses and there was pride and conceit in every one's eyes. He looked at Noori. She was dressed like a fisher girl. She was humble and unpretentious among all the queens and her eyes glowed with love for him. On seeing the king she went near him and

presented to him a lotus flower, which indicated that she was daughter of the lake. It pleased the king and he took her in carriage for a ride leaving all the royal queens behind. He then elevated her as his prima consort and gave the whole lake as a fief to her kinsmen. The lake is still there and since then is called after the name of Noori's father, Keenjher.

Introduction

In the love poetry of almost all the major, minor or vernacular, languages of the world, it is invariably the male who is the lover and female the beloved. Except some lesbian poetry like that of Sappho, the Greek poetess and the Persian poetry, which abounds with passions of love of male for the male. But it is a peculiarity of the love poetry of South Asia that it is mostly the female who is the lover and male is the object of love whom she zealously seeks and whose union she passionately yearns for. The reason of female being the lover is that it was believed that woman's passions of love were deeper, intenser and stronger than those of the male. Her loyalty was beyond doubt. It was believed so because the feudal society was a society where male was in a highly privileged position and woman was his property and honor whom he could not share with any one. Hence there were proverbs like: an honorable man is one who gives his life for three Zs, i.e. Zar (money) Zameen (land) and Zan (woman). Honor-killing was permitted by feudal conventional code, which still is in practice in an inhuman and beastly form. Man jealously guarded woman's chastity. He put all restrictions on her but allowed himself to satisfy his varied carnal appetites. An old book on political economy, Arthashaster, lays down moral obligations of a wife according to which she has to submit to her husband irrespective of his character:

*'Though he be uncouth and prone to pleasure,
Though he has no good points at all,
The virtuous wife should ever
Worship her lord as a god'.*

And to inculcate in her such slavish submission to her husband, supernatural and miraculous religious stories were fabricated. For instance, there is an ancient story, which goes as under:

A woman was holding her sleeping husband's head in her lap, as they warmed themselves in winter before a blazing fire. Suddenly their child crawled towards the fire, but the woman made no attempt to save him from the flames for fear of disturbing her lord. As the baby crawled further into the flames she prayed to the fire god Agni not to burn him. The god, impressed by her obedience to her husband, granted her prayer, and the child sat smiling and unharmed in the middle of the fire until the man awoke by himself.

Mostly all the wives believed such stories to be true and considered it their religious duty and obligation to be subservient to their husbands.

As a wife she was respected and lovingly cherished. Husband provided for all her comforts and luxuries like jewelry and costly clothes to the limits of his means. Her motherhood was taken as sacred. But it was a strange phenomenon that, at the one hand, her loyalty was considered beyond doubt but at the same time she was considered to be deceptive, disloyal, quarrelsome, wicked and incorrigibly fickle. It was she who was tempted by Satan and motivated Adam to disobey God. Hindus also have the same religious concept of woman. God Shiva dropped a fig tree from heaven and instigated woman to tempt man with it as conferring immortality. Man ate and thus disobeyed God. Her lust knows no bounds. As such she can betray her husband and consort even with a crippled man. Hence we find many stories and poems about her disloyalty and lust in ancient literature:

*The fire has never too many logs,
The ocean never too many rivers,
Death never too many souls,
And fair-eyed women never too many men.
(Mahabhart)*

Polygamy was permitted and there were many social reasons for that, main being the feudal feuds and tribal wars. Males were killed and women outnumbered them, they had to be provided necessities of life and protection. Hence it became necessary for a male to marry more than one wife. Woman's motherhood was also one of the reasons of polygamy. She nourished her child for a long period and abstained from marital relations as such male had to find another woman for his sexual appetites.

It was considered a blessing for a father to have many sons and he had to marry many wives so that he could get blessed. It was expected of a husband to treat all his wives equally but such expectation was psychologically impossible and husband was free not to realize such moral obligation. Wives were jealous of one another. Their jealousy is proverbial. The first wife was terribly grieved to learn about her husband's second marriage. Some poet of yore describes a wife's grief in the following words:

*Grief of a man, who has lost all his wealth,
And of him whose son is slain;
Grief of a wife, who has lost her lord,
And of him whom the king has made captive;
Grief of a childless woman,
And of him who feels a breath of a tiger at his back;
Grief of a wife whose husband has married another
woman;
These grieves are all alike.*

Male, being husband of many wives, could devote small portion of time to each of his wives that too depended on his sweet will. This resulted in silent competition among the wives. Every one of them tried to win her husband's favor and entice him. Hence they learnt new methods of adornment, embellishment, blandishment, coquetry; and ruses. This situation of uncertainty and insecurity in love intensified her amorous passions. Male being responsible for providing livelihood for his wife and children had to stay out of home for most of the part, where he had many things to do. Besides he

had many sources of amusements other than the amorous company of his wife. But woman was confined to home and she had no amusement except the company of her consort, which she longed for all the time. Hence poets idealized her love's intensity and depth, her unconditional loyalty, her submission and compliance to her husband; and her chastity. This is the reason that in the poetry of South Asia, particularly the mystic and spiritual poetry, it is mostly the woman who is the lover and male the beloved. The saints and mystic poets symbolized her as a soul who yearns and longs for union with God. The spiritualist poets expressed their spirituality in allegories, symbols; and used secular imagery and idiom. They symbolized attainment of God in various ways. Even saints like St. Bernard (1090-1153), St. Teresa (1515-82), and St. John of the Cross (1542-91), symbolized attainment of God through images of sexual love and spiritual marriage. Woman with all her physical appetites expresses her longing for her lover, which at the inner layer of such poetry, is the yearning of a soul for the universal Soul. For instance, in Hindu spiritual literature the story of the love of Radha and milkmaids with Krishna is expressed in secular language but at the inner layer of the story it is a mystic symbolic tale. Lord Krishna is the God incarnate and Radha signifies atonement, pacification or satisfaction; and applied to the human soul. It was in the 12th century that a poet from Bengal Jayadeva compiled a book, *Gita Govinda* (songs of herdsman). It was a book of lyrics intended to be sung and was about the love of Krishna and Radha. The tenor and tone of these lyrics were secular.

Shah Lateef has also expressed his spirituality and his mystic experiences in terms of worldly love in a secular language through female folk characters two of whom Leela and Noori we will meet in these pages.

The heroin of the long poem Kamoal, Noori stands for woman's sense of insecurity in regard to her amorous relationship with man. The poem opens with her beseeches to her lover king not to turn away from her after noticing her faults, which, she says, she is full of; not to forsake her after

seeing the beautiful faces of her royal queens and having realized that he has committed a blunder by marrying fisher girl.

*You are the Samma king, I am a Gandri fisher maid, the
embodiment of all imperfections,
Perceiving the beautiful faces of your queens, see that you
do not turn away from me.*

*

*You are the Samma king, I am a Gandri fisher girl with
limitless blemishes,
Perceiving the stink of fish, I am soaked with, see that you
do not turn away from me.*

*

*You are the Samma king, I am a Gandri fisher girl, my
flaws are count less,
Noticing the spots of fish secretions on me, see that you do
not turn away from me,*

The setting of the melody is a fishermen's village, situated on the bank of Keenjhar lake. It presents a bleak, dreary and gloomy picture of human life. There is filth, dirt and stinking odor of rotten fish all over the village. The dwellers are poor, physically weak, feeble, spiritless, undernourished and fleshless. They do not have even enough rags to cover their famished bodies nudity and they cover themselves with lotus leaves. Their women are dark complexioned, uncouth, filthy and ugly. Even the touch of their shirt's hem is repulsive and repugnant.

*Baskets full of stinky fish and winnows of fish intestine,
that is what they own,
Repulsive is the touch of their hem with anyone else's
helm,
But the Lord Samma is in their midst and showering
rewards on them.*

*

*Black complexioned, ugly, ill-mannered and, by no
standard, pleasant,
They sit beside the road with basketfuls of stinking fish
for sale,*

Who else would bear their uncouth manners except the Samma.

They live in this abject human predicament without any hope and ambition. They believe that it is their destiny to live like that. God regulates their lives; and God's ways are beyond comprehension. Even in this situation they are grateful to Him in the belief that their gratefulness would bring Divine mercy and blessings. This miserable human situation moves our poet and he is all sympathy for these victims of social order, which, to him, was their fate. He hopes for change in their miserable lives but he is also aware that this poignant human situation could not be changed. All human efforts, whatsoever, for change were futile, overridden by fate (the system). Society was well integrated; people's lives were regulated by social conventions, which had sanction of religion. Hence it was thought that whatever was happening to human beings was because of fate and no one could change fate.

Our poet's distressed mind is anesthetized by faith and he puts up with this miserable human situation by making virtue of their miseries and glorifying their poverty. He brings Jam, the persona of God, to these wretched people and we see the Jam showering pearls and jewels on them.

Shah, with his poetic craftsmanship, first paints the bleak and dreary picture of human misery and then weaves into it divine beauty which, with its magnetic force, attracts and brings round the king to the despicable village where he showers pearls on the pitiable creatures.

Noori's beauty evoked love in Jam's heart and the poet believes that Noori, with her love, exalted and ennobled the king by obliterating his ego. Love of fisher girl made him to descend from his lofty and mighty throne and become one with the fishermen. He no more felt the stink exuded by them nor did he mind the dirt and the filth the village was full of. He, like a professional fisherman, puts fishing net on his shoulder and catches fish with other fishermen in the scorching heat of the sun:

*There is some magic in Noori's eye,
The darts of her eyes pierced Jam,
She bewitched him with her glances,
It is because of love that Jam Tamachi is carrying fish net
on his shoulders.*

*

*Fisher girl had boat oars in her hands and Jam had fishing
net,
Yesterday there was a playful fishing in the Keenjher lake
all day long.*

At one point the poet suddenly twists the tale. The upper layer of the story is diluted, and the inner meaning, implications of the characters, the setting and the happenings are faintly unfolded. Jam Tamachi is no more a worldly king. He is the one who is neither born of any one nor has given birth to any one. Noori also becomes more than herself.

*Neither any one gave birth to Jam nor any one was born of
Jam
He cares for all Gandara female folk, young and old,
"He begets not nor is begotten" (Quran) is the truth of his
greatness,
Exalted and mighty is his throne.*

*

*There is no one in the environ of Keejhar as beautiful as is
Noori.
She is spared all fishing chores,
Tamachi the king himself stands up and fans her with
peacock feathers.*

For Shah the locale and the setting of his poetry are always meaningful and important. He puts his characters in a setting, which tells of the feel of the characters and is in harmony with their inner feelings and outer state of being. He has painted bleak picture of human misery to highlight king's benevolence. But when he describes love of Noori and Jam Tamachi, he paints atmosphere conducive to and in tune with their feelings. Hence we see Noori and Jam Tamachi sailing in a boat, below is the

crystal blue water of the lake, above them are the tree branches and on the bank are the straight rows of trees, casting shadow on the water and near the bank are the lotus flowers in full bloom. The north wind blows and the entire lake swings like a cradle.

*Water below, tree branches above and my beloved beside me,
All my desires are fulfilled none is unrealized.*

*Water below, tree branches above
and tree lined avenue beside bank,
Tamachi's boat floats leisurely in the lake.
North wind blows and Keenjher swings like a cradle*

*

*Water below, tree branches above and lotus flowers
floating near the bank
Spring is back and Keenjher is fragrant*

*

When Noori was married to the king and he brought her to his palace, she though now a queen did not give up her humility, she ornamented herself with humility and simplicity and thus won king's favor.

*There is not a streak of pride and vanity in the fisher girl,
The flutter of her eyes captivated the king,
Of all the queens she was the one he was enamored with.*

*

*Unique was the humility of Noori.
The fisher girl charmed Samo, the peerless among all,
And all the queens came and stood behind her,
Thus obliterating their pride.*

In the opening stanzas Noori, besides feeling insecure, is bitterly aware of her foibles and imperfections. This is a religious phenomenon. Mostly all the religions consider human being imperfect and sinful. But, paradoxically, religion sets a very high moral standard for this sinful creature to live up to. According to all religious faiths, God has created man for a set moral purpose and has been sending apostles from time to time for man's

guidance to realize His purpose. Hence long before Christ, the prophets of Israel preached moral idealism such as:

“ Judge not thy neighbor until thou has been in his place.”

“My humility is my exaltation and my exaltation is my humility.”

Buddha taught his disciples to cut out drink, women and worldly possessions. This is moral idealism, impossible for a human to act upon. Confucius questioned this theological morality and said:

It is impossible to love enemy and if one loves his enemy, then with what he would compensate kindness?

The question whether religious morality is practicable or not had been subject of discussions and debate among the religious scholars. In the year 400 A.D. one Welshman named Pelagius and Saint Augustan of Gippo had huge argument. Pelagius believed that man could obey the commandments of God. But Saint Augustan said that God did not give us commandments in order that we should obey them, but to prove that we could not. He gave us commandments in order to convict us of sin. It is the Christian concept of sin that flows from their premise that it is very difficult for a man to be morally perfect. Religion has instilled in man that concept of perfection and he knows how much he falls short of it. It is because of this awareness that even great saints suffer from a sense of sin and repent for the sins committed by them knowingly or unknowingly. When Noori says to the king that she is imperfect and an embodiment of flaws she in fact expressing poet's awareness of his imperfection, flaws and defects in terms of his obedience to God's commandments. She also describes her filthy condition, which too denotes man's imperfection and sinful predicament.

Musical Interpretation

Shah has compiled this poem under raga Kaamoad. This raga is basically a raga of love and expresses amorous feelings.

The literal meaning of Kaamoad is " That which gives one the thing desired." In Tantra Yoga one of the names of god Shiva is Kama. Kama is also love god represented as a handsome youth with a bow of sugar cane strung with a row of bees, his arrows are of flowers. He is attended by a troop of nymphs. His arrows pierce hearts of gods and humans alike. Once he attempted to pierce Shiva's heart. Shiva was furious and burnt him to ashes. It was then through the entreaties of Shiva's favorite wife Rati, meaning pleasure, that Shiva restored Kama to life. Kama is referred in the hymn of creation and in certain Vedic passages as being the first born of the primeval chaos. But this Kama is certainly not the Hindu love god who is a vaguely personified cosmic desire.

The octave of raga Kaamoad is as under:

Ascending notes: Sa-Re(sharp) Ma(flat) Pa-Dha(sharp)
Ni(sharp) Sa

Descending notes: Sa-Re(sharp)Ga(sharp) Ma(flat)Pa-
Dha(sharp)Ni(sharp) Sa.

Its Vadi note is Pa and Samvadi note is Re.

Its time of singing is evening when sun is about to set.

Melody of Killers (*Sur Ghatoo*)

Karachi, the present boisterous and pretentious city, bubbling with furor, frenzy, and fury was once, like all present day cities, a small placid village. Historians tell us that its old name was Kolachi after the name of an old woman who was head of the village. The other view is that it was a village of Kolachi tribe, who are Baluchs on maternal side and Soomras on paternal side, and because of that tribe it was called Kolachi. In my view, its name was Kalanchi or Kalachi, which was in currency even up to the period when Shah Abdul Lateef Bhittai (1689-1752), the great mystic poet of Sindh, was composing poetry and immortalizing folktales, legends and historical and semi-historical characters of Sindh. He has also used Kalachi as name of the village Kolachi in his poem 'Ghattoo' meaning killer. It is a linguistic rule that letter "L" changes to letter "R" and vice versa. For example, letter L of Urdu word Suli (gallows) to Suri, in Sindhi. It was according to this rule that, with passage of time, letter L changed to letter R and old Kalachi became Karachi. I think Kalanchi is a combination of two words *kalan* and *chi*. *Kalan* means big and *chi* means settlement or a village. Another Sindhi word *Pore* is also used as suffix for a village fortified with mud walls. It is used all over the sub-continent and even out of the sub-continent like Singapore meaning the village of lions (*Sanga* = lion + *por* = fort) There are many towns and villages in Sindh carrying *chi* as a suffix like *Dabechi-Golarchi* etc. Though Karachi as a seaport gained importance only in the 19th century but there are many Sindhi folktales having locale of old Kalanchi. One of the tales is "Moriro and Manger Much"

(Moriro, the name of a character in the tale, is a diminutive of Moar meaning peacock, and Mangermuch means very big fish like whale) Folktales also tell history in a fictionalized and mythological way, and are collective forms of expression, depicting history and culture, moral values and ideals, religious and social perceptions of a particular community, imaginative explanation of natural order and cosmic forces and thus verbalize something universal. George Santayana, the twentieth century philosopher, defined man as an incorrigible animist who interprets all things anthropomorphically; he personifies and dramatizes nature and creates myths. Though people don't literally believe in those myths but the poetry of those myths helps men to bear the prose of life." The tale we are talking about goes as under:

The tale

In good old days, there was a village of fishermen called Kalachi. The main source of subsistence of the villagers was fish catching; they used to row their boats deep to catch fish. In the locality now known as Clifton, was a hazardous whirlpool called "Kalachi jo Kun" meaning the Whirlpool of Kalachi. Boats were caught and sunk in the whirlpool. Once a killer whale took abode in the whirlpool and devoured the crew of the boats caught in the whirlpool. It was the spot, where one Hindoo named *Seth Bhjomal* later built a mud fort and extended it to the present Kharadar and mounted it with foreign made canons. There was another village of fishermen known as *Sonmiani* at distance of 60 miles from Kalachi. In Sonmiani lived one fisherman named *Oubhayo*. He had seven sons, all strong and well built except the youngest called *Moriro*, who, being short statured and handicapped, was not taken for fishing. His six brothers used to go for catch early in the morning and return after sunset. One day they did not return. It worried the villagers. They set out in their search and discovered that their boats had been caught in the whirlpool and the whale had devoured them. Learning about the tragic death of his brothers, *Moriro*, though handicapped, resolved to take revenge and rid the villagers of the killer whale. He got an iron cage made, fitted

with pointed spikes on outside, and with strong ropes tied to it. Looses ends of the ropes were fastened around the necks of two strong male buffaloes. He sat in the cage and it was lowered into the whirlpool. He had instructed the villagers to pull out the cage when he shook ropes. As the cage was lowered the whale, seeing a prey, rushed to swallow it. It got hooked and pierced with spikes. Moriro shook the ropes and the cage was pulled out along with the killer whale hooked to the cage. Villagers cut open its stomach and brought out skeletons of the dead brothers and buried them near the foot of a hill. Moriro spent rest of his life as keeper of the grave. Moriro himself was also buried there. The place, located near the Hindoo crematory, came to be known as the "The Graveyard Morriro". It is at a distance of two miles from main Karachi.

Itroduction

Shah Lateef Bhittai has used the tale to elucidate his religiosity and spirituality by combining his visionary gleams to the tale. As is his way, he has appropriated certain situations, events, and some distinct features of the tale having rich implications. Shah's Sur Ghatoo (Melody of killers) is symbolization of the inner struggle of man with beast in him devouring him spiritually and a whirlpool in which soul sinks during his spiritual voyage. The sea could be interpreted as a symbol of infinity, the other world as well as this world, the mystery of life and death, the enigma beyond comprehension, and whale as man's base self. Hence Shah says:

*The know-all got perplexed, the intrepid confused,
They went together in the current, came across Mahran,
And the poor souls forgot all their past and present
knowledge.*

Having become aware of the whirlpool and the whale inside him, man embarks upon search for the whirlpool, which is beyond search. But eventually he succeeds in killing the whale and his face glows with spiritual salvation.

*Entering the deep, hey searched hard, explored the
unexplored,*

They killed the whale; their faces aglow.

At places the whirlpool connotes mysterious terror of death. Whosoever goes to the vortex, never returns to tell how he was caught therein:

*There was such fury in the whirlpool that,
Whoso went in was lost,
No one can say who trapped their nets?*

At places our poet, like imagist poets, uses concrete images to convey something abstract. The whale devours six brothers, the night has set in, their empty boat is swinging on waves with its oars and poles floating, their turbans, lying behind in the boat, are wet with dew. Their wives, standing on the shore of the roaring and rumbling vast and illimitable deep, are moaning and wailing for their departed husbands. Being solely dependent for their livelihood on their husbands in a male society, they are now in the clutches of insecurity:

*Night set in moistening their turbans with dew,
Oars floated, poles drifted down the stream,
No one ever came back from Kalachi.*

*

*Now that I have borrowed fish, bring my fish catchers
back, O God,
O Lord, do not let me down before the fish merchants,
It is now in their absence that my pride has come to
appreciate their worth.*

*

*Every day I see many fishermen with their catch aplenty,
And bring home fish aplenty,
It is killing to see my own fishermen's things at home,
Departing from the world they are lost into the deep.*

Melody of Enthrallment (*Sur Sourath*)

The Tale

Once upon a time there lived a Rajpoot king Rae Dyach, who ruled over Kathiwar with capital at Girnar. He was a brave, kind and benevolent king, loved by his people. He was lover of music and a great patron of musicians and minstrels. His sister was childless and yearned for one most ardently. One day she called a fortune-teller and asked him whether she would ever bear a child or not. The fortune-teller told her that she would certainly be a mother and will, very soon, be bestowed with a son. But, he warned, when the child will come of age, he will behead his uncle king Dyach. On hearing this she cried aghast: "I would like to die childless than to have a son who would kill my dearest brother and a benevolent king".

The fortune-teller could not help her as it was all pre-determined.

It happened that within a year the first part of the fortune-teller's prediction came true and a son was born to the sister-princess. Remembering the fortune-teller's prediction, she, being woe-begone, ordered for the newborn child to be drowned in the river. When the servants were carrying out the orders, they were moved by the innocence of the child and instead of drowning him; they put him in a wooden box, and sent it afloat on the surface of the river. The river flowed towards the kingdom of Ani Rai, the king of Ajmer.

Incidentally a Charan (herdsman and a pastoral musician) saw the floating box. He took it out and brought it home. When

he opened it, he was amazed to see a beautiful baby, wearing a sweet smile on his petal-like lips. His pleasure knew no bounds, as he was childless. So he took the baby as a gift of the river. He adopted the child and named him Beejal.

Ani Rae the coeval of Rae Dyach and ruler of Ajmer was a proud and conceited king. He had several daughters but no son. He longed for a son, who could be his heir and ascend his throne after his death. But, to his utter disappointment, again a girl was born. It made him furious and, in frenzy, he ordered that the newborn baby be thrown in the river. The servants immediately carried out king's orders. But they also put the baby in a wooden box along with gold and pearls and put it on the waves. The kind waves bore the box to a village, which was situated in the kingdom of Rae Dyach. A poor potter, named Ratno, saw the box floating on the waves. He took the box out and opened it. His heart fluttered to see a beautiful baby girl sucking her thumb. As he had no child of his own, he took the baby as a gift from God. The gold and pearls, the baby had brought with her, made him rich. He brought up his foster daughter like a princess and named her Sourath. She learnt music and excelled in the art.

On the other side when Beejal came of age, he helped the Charan in taking the herd to jungle for grazing. Charan taught him music and he played fiddle with masterly skill. When he was all alone in the jungle, surrounded by grazing sheep, the jungle would sing to him songs of silence and solitude. He listened to those melodies of silence and tranquility and played them on his fiddle. He invented a fiddle, stringed it with deer gut and named it a surrando. He played the surrando with such a charm that even the wild animals of jungle were enchanted with his music. They gathered round him and drowsed. Birds forgot their chirping and flew down to perch on his shoulders. The Charan, who had taught him music, was overjoyed and felt proud of his foster son's musical excellence. He married him to a beautiful girl of his clan.

Ratno was subject of king Dyach but he had joined king Ani Rai's court. When Sourath came of a marriageable age, it worried Ratno and he felt his heart little heavy. She was, no doubt, a princess and Ratno had brought her up like a princess.

He wanted her to marry a king or a prince but he being a potter by cast, was unable to find a suitable match for her from amongst his own clan. King Ani Rae observed that his courtier was worried and wore a gloomy face. One day he asked him as to what was agitating his mind. Ratno told him. The king showed his willingness to solve his problem by accepting his daughter as his queen. Ratno did not expect such a favor from the king. He immediately consented and went to his village to make arrangements for the marriage.

Ratno was subject of king Dyach and when he learnt that his subject was giving his daughter in marriage to king Ani Rai, who was not a good man, he immediately called him and ordered him to marry his daughter to him. Ratno, being Dyach's subject, had no choice but to consent. Even otherwise king Dyach was a nice man and a better choice. Ratno agreed and Sourath was married to king Dyach. This was a great insult to Ani Rai. His blood boiled and he immediately attacked king Dyach to get back Sourath. But he suffered heavy losses and was abjectly defeated. He suffered double loss at the hands of Dyach that of losing the girl he had fancied and defeat on the battle ground. He was now all afire to avenge it. Finding no other way to take revenge from his adversary enemy, he gave jewels and gold to town-criers asking them to show it to the people and proclaim as to whoever brought the head of Dyach, the enemy of the king Ani Rae and his country, he will get the jewels and the gold. When the town-criers came to Beejal's village, Beejal was not home, his wife got tempted. She thought that king Dyach was so a bounteous lover of music and had never refused a bard's demand. Her husband was a master musician, whose music bewitched even wild animals, it would certainly please the king and whatever her husband demanded, the king would give it to him, even if demand was for king's head. Taking her speculations to be true and blinded by the greed, she took gold and jewels and promised that her husband would bring the head of king's enemy Dyach.

When Beejal learnt of it he was shocked. He had never even thought of demanding any thing as reward for his music, how could he demand king's head and that too of a munificent king like Dyach. But he knew that if he did not fulfill his wife's

promise, the king Ani Rae will wipe him and his family. Hence, having no other choice, he took his fiddle and set forth on foot to Girnar, the capital of Dyach's kingdom.

When he reached Girnar he played his fiddle near king's palace. On hearing his music king called him and listened to his music. He liked it so much that he offered him many gifts but Beejal refused all. And one day the king was so bewitched with his music that he asked him to demand any boon and it would be granted to him. Beejal realized that that was the proper time to try his luck. So he asked the king.

"Are you giving me word of honor o king?"

"Yes, I give you word of honor" king replied "You ask for any boon and I will give it to you"

"Then give me your head o king,"

Dyach had not expected such a demand from the bard; as such he was shocked and perplexed. Regaining his composure, the king offered Beejal wealth and gold in lieu of his head but the bard refused all and continued reminding him that he had given him the word of honor and Rajpoots valued their word of honor more than their life. Finding no way out, the king gave his head and thus Beejal eventually got what he had come for.

In the meanwhile king AniRae had learnt that the girl, he was marrying, was, in fact, his daughter whom he had thrown in the river. When Beejal brought king Dyach's head he was grieved and he banished the bard from his kingdom saying that he had killed a great king and that if he stayed in his kingdom he would not hesitate to kill him also. Beejal went back to his village, took his wife with him and went to Girnar. When he neared the city he saw Sourath, mounting a great pyre and flinging herself in the fire. Beejal was struck with grief, recalling that he had brought death to king Dyach and destruction to his family. He was seized with so intense remorse that he also flung himself in the fire. Beejal's wife seeing all these terrifying happenings realized that she was the real cause of all these miseries. It was she who, by taking AniRae's jewels, had made her husband to seek the head of king Dyach and princess Sourath to this end. To atone for her guilt she also jumped into flames.

Since then the ragni Beejal had played on his fiddle and for which king Dyach gave his head as boon to the musician, is called Sourath after the name of princess Sourath

A Destiny Drama

Like all great tragedies this tale is also dreary and doom laden. It is primarily concerned with predetermined misfortune and distress that befall the hero of the story Rae Dyach. He holds power and position and possesses all the good qualities of a tragic hero, which place him above the ordinary run of mortal man. He is virtuous, brave, benevolent and chivalrous, who prizes his word of honor more than any thing else, even his life. And these very qualities bring his destruction.

It is said about the tragic hero that destruction does not come to him from outside but from within. He commits some mistake, which is not necessarily the result of some moral fault. It could simply be a miscalculation, his failure to foresee the consequences of his deeds. Dyach, without calculating that the bard could demand such a boon, gives him word of honor and is trapped in the net.

One tragic dramatist of early seventeenth century Cyril Tourneur, remarked about tragedy that:

***When bad bleeds, then is the tragedy good.*¹**

For him tragic hero is one who violates moral values, commits some sin or guilt and as result of that he is punished and he suffers, thus his sufferings become retributive justice. But we see many tragic characters who are not bad, who are highly moral. It is not any sin or guilt but their high qualities, which undo them. They aim at good but produce ruin and destruction for themselves. Oedipus, the great Greek tragic hero, was not an evil man. He had, no doubt, committed horrifying sin of "sowing the womb of her who bore him." But whatever sin he committed it was in utter ignorance. It was not he but gods who were evil. He was victimized by destiny.

¹ Dictionary of Literary Terms & Literary Theory

Anouilh, the tragedian of seventeenth century, says through chorus in his play "Antigone" that the overwhelming part about tragedy is the element of hopelessness, and of inevitability.

"In tragedy nothing is in doubt and every one's destiny is known hope, that foul, deceitful thing, has no part in it"² In this story also, though the reader knows the destiny of Dyach, the king, but still he is being deceived by that "foul and deceitful thing" and hopes that the prediction of the fortune-teller would not come true. Every effort, that is being made to evade the prediction, gives a new hope to the reader. But eventually his hope dissolves into despair and inevitability of destiny is proved. Hence this story can be categorized as a destiny tragedy.

Like all tragic characters Dyach, the protagonist, with all his good qualities and power, stands helpless before the destiny. He is driven to his tragic end by his good qualities and his high sense of honor. All efforts to avert the doom, contribute to making the prediction of the fortune-teller possible. The sister princess throws away her newly born child in the river to forestall what is ordained the destiny but this very act of hers leads to the inevitable and seals king's doom

Anouilh remarks about the hero and the villain: "There is sort of fellow-feeling among characters in a tragedy, he who kills is as innocent as he who gets killed" There is no doubt that the bard Beejal, who kills the king, is only an instrument. The real killer is king Ani Rae, but this cannot exonerate Beejal from the guilt of killing, hence his punishment. At the end of the story he throws himself in the fire. His wife, though a minor character, is the major culprit. It was she who, overcome by greed, leaves no way out for Beejal but to kill the king. She also meets the retributive justice and burns herself to ashes. Their deeds evoked anguish in the reader for the tragic situation the king is placed in. But the deaths of Beejal and his wife produce a therapeutic effect and thus catharsis of the reader is accomplished. But reader's fire rage against the real villain Ani Rae is not extinguished

² Ibid

There is a dramatic suspense and a state of uncertainty and curiosity about the outcome of the story. Suspense is sustained through out whether the prediction will come true or not. Suspense is between the characters but reader knows the implications of different situations. Ani Rae dose not know that the girl whom he intends to marry is his real daughter. This morally horrifying situation is forestalled when Dyach marries the girl, but this act of Dyach spells out doom. The sister-princess does not know that the child thrown in the river has been saved and has become an excellent musician. Dyach does not know that the bard, who has come to behead him, is his nephew and the bard does not know that he has come to kill his maternal uncle. But the reader knows all.

When I first read Sophocles' great tragedy Oedipus Rex, I was amazed to notice the similarities of situations and events of Oedipus Rex and this folk tale. This is probably because both are the stories of man against destiny. The characters of the tale and the tragedy are fighting with destiny and struggling to avert their predetermined end. They refuse to act like puppets in the hands of fate. They want to be masters of their fate. But ironically whatever efforts they make, contribute to their predetermined end.

In Oedipus Rex God Apollo had predicted that Laios, the king of Thebes, would be killed by his son.

In this folk tale the fortune-teller predicted that the newborn baby will kill the king

When baby was born to king Laios he, with an intention to prove the oracle wrong, pierces baby's ankles and gives the baby to his shepherd to throw him down a lonely mountain side to die.

Beejal is also thrown in the river so that the prediction of the fortune-teller does not come true.

Oedipus had no name but as his both the ankles were pierced, he is named Oedipus meaning swollen foot.

Beejal also does not have name and as he is found in water he is named Beejal meaning the water borne.

Oedipus and Beejal both are ordered to die but the servants who are to carry out orders, are moved with pity and both babies are eventually saved.

The shepherds, who have no child of their own, adopt both. Parents of both the babies are sure of their death. Mother of Oedipus queen Iocaste jeers at the oracle:

*Thus Apollo never caused that child
To kill his father, and it was not Laios fate
To die at the hands of his son, as he had feared.
This is what prophets and prophecies are worth.*

But, as Oedipus put it, God was weaving a net for him and the act of throwing away the babies, made the oracle and the prediction come true.

And then all events lead the characters to their predetermined end. Oedipus, unknowingly, kills his father and thus the oracle proved right. Beejal also, without knowing as to whom he is killing, beheads his own maternal uncle king Dyach, and thus the prediction of the fortune-teller comes true. And Oedipus cries: "Who can deny the savagery of gods"

The difference between the two is that Oedipus is written by a great dramatist while Sourath-Rae Dyach is a folktale, written, to use Yeats' phrase, in "the book of people"

Arthur Miller says that the tragic hero makes a large and total claim and that the audience often sense triumph rather than despair in tragedies. We often feel that we have witnessed human greatness that the hero, despite profound suffering, has lived according to his ideals. We may feel that we have achieved new insight in human greatness.³

These remarks may not be true about other tragic heroes like Julius Caesar, Macbeth or Hamlet but are very much true in the case of Dyach. He lived according to his ideal and we really feel that we have witnessed human greatness in him.

³ Ibid

Introduction

Sourath is a popular Sindhi folktale as well as a popular classical raga. Like raga Khambavati, raga Saorath also derives its name from Saorashtra. Though the raga and the folk tale, both, originated out of Sindh, both have gone deep down into the ethos of Sindh. As such, they are more of Sindh than their place of origin. Even now the tale is chanted and the raga is sung at folk level all over Sindh and Shah Abdul Lateef has immortalized both, the raga and the tale, in his poetry. In this melody also Shah has selects some events and motifs of the tale and has put across his mystic view of life and death. Hence there is no well made story, slick plotting and mechanical artifices.

As the Sur opens, we meet the bard Beejal. He has made all preparations for his mission. He has decorated his fiddle with tassels and tiny bells and we see him praying to God for the success of his mission.

The bard Beejal, pinning hope on Allah, set out from his town,

He tied tassels and tiny bells to his fiddle, On seeing the sedan of Rae Dyatch from a distance he prayed to God

“O Gracious one, may the king be ravished by my music.

As we enter in the panorama of second chapter we see him playing his fiddle with such a masterly skill that the whole city gets fidgety and seems to be in flames. People shower pearls on him but he does not touch them. His music is heard in the palace, where maids are enthralled and queens are entranced. King also likes his music and sends for him and thus the bard reaches his destination. Hereinafter we see that the reality of folk characters is deliberately blurred so that poet's mystic ideas are crystallized and the episode becomes a journey in the inner world, a sort of “redemptive odyssey”. The characters transcend themselves and become more than themselves, hence they are to be deciphered at different stages as they are not spelt out. In the beginning of the tale Beejal is an ordinary bard but in the fourth chapter he becomes a transcendental symbol presenting the

supranarmol or super reality. Words loose their conventional meaning and evoke something over and above their actual sense and sound. As such our imagination is resonated and stimulated towards some thing elusive.

Beejal plays his fiddle in king's presence. As the music progresses, the king gets transfixed and Beejal, realizing that the king is spiritually elevated, reveals his real identity. He tells the king

"I am Ahmed with out letter M"

*(If letter m is taken out of the word Ahmed it becomes
Ahad meaning one which is essence of God)*

*With skill and modesty he played the instrument
The peerless king responded to his music from his palace
At a suitable time the minstrel unfolded his identity" I am
Ahmed without letter M"*

*There were only few who could understand that the
minstrel and the king were one.*

It is in this chapter that we see the finite Dyach blend with infinite and becoming more than what he appeared to us in the beginning of the tale. And both, the king and the bard, shedding their separateness and duality, become one.

*With skill and modesty the bard struck the chords,
The king, listening to his music, responded from the
palace,
He then graciously called the bard in the castle,
Thus the king and the bard became one.*

In the fourth chapter the bard transformed into another persona. With his presence king's tent is all light and there are moon rays all over. This light can be perceived with downcast eyes and with one's inner eye. Many countries are given to him as present and the rulers of various countries, seeing the bard radiating light, realized as to who he really was

*The bards never come to palace without a set purpose,
(When they come) The down cast eyes perceive light with
light,*

*The moon rays sparkle in king's tent,
Lateef says when the bard received many countries in gift
It was then that the rulers recognized him.*

When the music goes deep down in king's soul and purifies him, he realizes that it is not the music but some mystery, some secret call that is vibrating in the chords:

*It is not the music, it is some mystery vibrating in the
chords,
It is not the fiddle but the hands (of the bard) that are
unfolding the mystery,
O bard! Pounce like a falcon and snatch whatever you
want*

*

*Whatever has been communicated by your chords, has
been granted,
My head is here in lieu of your music,
Head is made of clay when it is cut it will just be a dust.*

King is ready to give his head but it is not worth the music. He wants to give some thing that is equal in worth to bard's music. Hence he says:

*I can not equate my head with notes of the strings of your
fiddle,
Do not return home (disappointed) I do not refuse to give
my head but it is worthless,
I really feel ashamed to chop it for you.*

*

*If I put my head in one scale and only one string of your
fiddle in another,
The scale of your string, when struck by you, will be
weightier
My head is a hollow skull, it is of no value.*

Now the poet contrives the situation of the folk tale to suit his mystic view. From the very outset it is made known that the bard has come with a set mission of beheading the king but

when king agrees to give his head the bard says; (and his words connote more than they denote.)

*The most difficult thing is giving, but to give away head is
delightful and tranquilizing,
Therefore, O Dyach! However hard, give me that which,
though painful, is related to music.*

*

*O king! Put that in my pouch which is related to music,
Do not turn me away, I have been here since long,*

*

*O king! You have agreed to give your head as present to
me, (it is not something exemplary)*

*Every one can give his head (for his honor, country or
family)*

*Give me something that could be example and legacy for
mendicant bards.*

Apparently what Beejal says is ambiguous and paradoxical and no one can understand as to what the bard really wants. What is that which he values more than king's head and which could be the legacy for the mendicant bards? We know that language of poetry is language of paradox and the king comprehends the truth contained in the contradiction and says to Beejal in a paradoxical language:

"The real existence is in non-existence"

Probably the beheading of king is not physical but symbolic. It symbolizes obliteration of ego. The king achieves the state of self-annihilation through music and thus exists in non-existence. But the bard, who plays the music, can not achieve it simply because the music he plays does not affect him in the way it affects others, and seeing him cool and intact while playing the music, the king tells him astonished:

*There is something really strange about your fiddle,
You play it with your hands but you are unscathed,
When you played it last night, it cut my heart in two
pieces.*

Beejal thus asks the king to give him that which is related to music and which should also elevate him to that spiritual peak where king existed in nonexistence and that would be a legacy for the mendicant bards. When he does not get it he, in a rage, comes back and throws away king's head to him:

*Dayach did not give away, he only tantalized the
supplicants,
Realizing this the bard came and gave him back his head.*

*

Going through the sur we see the symbols intermingling and overlapping and at one place the bard becomes a symbol of death

*He begs for head, he insists for head. Nothing can satisfy
him except king's head,
He never spare the poor, he kills the nobles
He bows down the rulers and squeezes their breath,
The creator will never spare any one, be it evening or
morning*

*

*O you minstrel, may you never come again,
All the time you remind of death.
We have seen you throwing crowns on ground.*

*

*The matchless fiddle started emanating music,
The alchemy like bard struck the chords skillfully,
When he saw Rae Dayach he unfolded his real self,
And he took out dagger and plunged it in his neck*

*

Thereinafter the surrealistic world of mystic symbolism is created and story takes an illogical turn.

*Sourath is dead (she immolated herself) and it is all peace,
(she was bone of contention between the two kings)
The king pitched his tent somewhere else,
Then there were melodies and music all over,
Behold! The king enjoys music and is happy.*

*

*Sourath is dead and it is all peace, the king unpitched his
tent,*

There was no music and no chord vibrated.

It was then that the bard gave the head back to Dayach.

Sourath Raga

As already stated Sourath is a popular raga of our classical frame of ragas. It is ascribed to Khamach That (Framework). Its ascending and descending notes are as under

Sa-Re-Ma-Pa-Ni-Sa

Sa-Ni-Dha-Pa-Ma-Re-Sa

It has a close resemblance with Raga Des. When the Ga is dropped from the ascending notes of Raga Des, it takes the form of Sourath. Besides, the difference of Wadi (Sonant) note in both the ragas, gives them different shape and appearance. Wadi sur of raga Saorath is Re and its Samwadi (Consonant) Sur is Dha.

As regards its name, there is difference of opinion among the scholars. Some scholars opine that its name is derived from the word Saorashter the land of its birth where it sprang and attained popularity. With the passage of time and usage the word Saorashter became Sourath. Some scholars contend that Sourath is a linguistic variation of the word Surat, a popular port in Gujrat. These are all scholastic speculations. Besides these speculations we should also look into the "book of peoples," the legends and folklore. According to a legend the raga is named after Sourath the heroin of the tale. Let us believe folk wisdom

Melody of Martyrdom (*Sur Kedar*)

The Event

During the Caliphate of Hazrat Ali, the Muslim empire was rent by constant feuds between him and Amir Muawiya, the governor of Syria. To restore normalcy the empire was divided into two parts—one with its seat in Kufa comprising Hijaz, Iraq and all eastern provinces, was ruled by Hazrat Ali, and the other its seat at Damascus and comprising Syria, Egypt and rest of western provinces was ruled by Amir Muawwiya. Upon the assassination of Hazrat Ali in 40 A.H (660 A.D.), his eldest son, Imam Hassan was chosen as his successor. While Imam Hassan was setting down to rule, Amir Muawiya launched his armies against him. Imam Hassan, in order to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, abdicated his dominion to Amir Muawiya for title to revenue Ahwaz and annual stipend two million dirhams for his younger brother Imam Hussain. The Muslims' realm thus became a single entity and Muawiya its sole ruler. When he died in 60 A.H. (680 A.D.), his son Yazid succeeded him. Many nobles in Makkah and Madina including Imam Hussain refused to vow allegiance to him. Most Muslims were forced to submit except Imam Hussain, who decided to resist Yazid's usurpation of Khilafat. In the meanwhile Imam Hussain received letters from the Kufis promising him of their allegiance against Yazid, who, until that time, was leading a luxurious life and had proved to be unworthy of Khilafat. As Imam was preparing to leave for Kufa, he was advised by many of his well-wishers not to trust Kufis, because they were inherently treacherous. But Imam did

not heed their advice and set out for Koofa with 72 persons mostly his family members and relatives. He was on his way to Kufa that he was intercepted at Karbala by Umer bin Saeed, the commander of Yazid, who had 4,000 soldiers at his command. The Koofies, as foretold, betrayed the Imam and joined Yazid's forces. Imam offered the commander to allow him to go to Yazid and talk to him but the commander refused saying that Imam should first declare his allegiance and only then he could meet Yazid. Imam refused and the battle ensued, and as expected, Imam with all his male companions, was brutally massacred except two young boys and ladies who were taken to Syria as captives. The battle took place in the Muslim month of Muharram in 61 A.H.(681 A.D) on the banks of Enphrates river at Karbala in Iraq.

Introduction

This melody is an elegy, a funeral hymn and a dirge for the martyrdom of Immam Hussain. It is also an epic of valor, valiance, bravery and self-sacrifice. The poem begins with a note of dirge and Shah, having sighted the moon of Muslim lunar month Muharram, remembers the martyrs of Karbala and mourns for them. He, like all others, is unable to find the rationale for what had happened to the Imam, and hence submits to the incomprehensiveness of God's actions and says: 'Verily He does what He pleases', and 'Verily all praise is due to Allah, who issues such orders.'

When we witness such horrible, tragic and inhuman incidents occurring in life we get engulfed by the darkness of despair and grief. We become terribly bitter about life, and all philosophical and religious explanations of human sufferings become barren and futile. They leave, to use Oscar Wild's phrase, 'dust and ashes in our mouth.' But despair too, like all other human condition, is time bound, and with passage of time, it subsides and life stirs in us again and we, like our poet, find explanations for such happenings. Our poet's explanation of this horrifying happening is that this entire incident was an expression of God's mercy and favor, a nuptial ceremony:

*The hardship of martyrdom was divine grace,
Only perfect devotees can comprehend the mystery of
Karbala's occurrence.*

By saying this he even exonerates Yazid who, according to the poet himself, was used as an instrument for it, as all was preordained and no one could evade it:

*Hearken, the hardship of martyrdom is a nuptial
ceremony,
Yazeed was little aware that it was all a matter of love,
Death is like rain for the descendents of Ali.*

*

*The hardship of martyrdom was a rain of mercy,
Yazeed knew not, it was a sign of love,
The Imams have an eternal covenant to die.*

*

*The hardship of martyrdom was a rain of mercy
Yazeed had no idea, it was a sign of love,
The Imams were destined for slaughter from the beginning.*

In the second part of the poem the poet portrays, with perfect poetic craft, images of the valor of the combatants. While reading the poem, we feel transported to the battlefield, where there is turmoil all around, the entire battlefield sounds with shrieks, striking swords, shouts and groans of the wounded and the dying. Horses standing on their hind legs, hoist their bodies upward, toss their mane and with quivering nostrils, neigh forcefully. Ladies of the wounded combatants, seeing their dead or wounded relatives carried in cotton-sheet-stretchers, beat their breasts and throw dust on their faces:

*The cotton sheet stretchers carrying the wounded and the
dead bodies are swinging,
Wives of the dead and wounded combatants throw dust in
their own faces and mourn,
They beat their breasts; mourn vociferously, and entire
battleground sounds with roars and cries.*

And the combatants, not aware of their wives' grief, are striking and challenging enemies and at the same time watching out for their fellow combatants. Swords flash, heads toss on ground and it is all turmoil:

*To strike, challenge, and to care for comrades, is the way
of the brave,
Doing all this they maintain the tempo of the game of
striking swords*

*

*Braves confronted the braves, swords clashed,
They shout, strike and pile enemies' corpses,
Heads fall and toss, it is turmoil all around.*

*

*On this side they shouted and on that side they struck,
The clarions and bugles sounded on both sides,
Horses and combatants were crimsoned like bridegrooms
on wedding night.*

Even the combatants' wives pray for death of their spouses. They also pray to see the wounds in their faces, not on their backs to make sure that they didn't escape from the battleground. She would feel proud to formant the wounds received in the face by her spouse:

*May you die and I mourn for you, do not come back my
husband,
My mates would taunt me for your desertion.*

*"Ran away" I won't say, "killed" I would believe,
I will be proud to foment wounds on my husband's face,
I will die of shame if the wounds are on his back.*

*O escapee, you have disgraced me by running away,
They are faulting me whose heads are high with pride.*

*Those, whose heads are high, faces are raised, bewail for
their consorts,*

"O mates, my brave has washed stains of all.

*May you die and I mourn for you, do not come back, my spouse,
Taunts have a long stretch; life only a few days.
Were she to learn that her spouse had escaped from the battlefield she would have ashamedly said:*

*Putting me in disgrace you escaped from the battlefield,
They, whose spouses are killed, hold their heads high with pride.*

*

*Those, whose heads are high are wailing,
"O mates, my valiant consort raised all heads high by his martyrdom"*

Shah also gives his concept of valor and fearlessness. For him the combatants, who wear armor in the battle, love life, whereas brave men, who love death more than life, need no armor:

*The one who wears armor in battle, lusts for life,
He alone is brave, who all the time longs for crusade.*

War is over, dead bodies of the martyrs are scattered all over on the battlefield, and vultures swarm over them. These vultures are of a different stock. Though hungry, they shy away cowards' corpses but avidly feed on brave men's flesh. Among the dead are the bodies of Imam and his family members:

*Beard dyed in blood, teeth red like pomegranate-flowers,
Full moon like turban lying in the battlefield,
His mother was proud among Muhammad's followers,
Bravo to the brave, who is hacked in pieces on the battlefield.*

*

*Beard dyed in blood, teeth like well set pearls,
Forehead glowing like full moon in the battlefield,*

"Allah is the light of skies and earth"¹ was reflected on earth,

His mother was collecting pebbles of Karbala,

Hazrat Ali was wiping blood drops of his wounds,

The Creator forgave all because of his martyrdom.

Imam had only 72 persons with him and enemy's army consisted of 4,000 soldiers. In this situation defeat and death of Imam and his comrades was certain. It was not their death which was pathetic but the cruelty with which they were treated was dismal. They were not allowed to draw water from Euphrates, and, having killed all near and dear ones of Imam in his presence the enemies inflicted 34 spear wounds and 32 sword stabs on him and then beheaded him and mutilated his body under horse hooves. Such human situation enrages us and we feel terribly bitter about life. The poem brings us face to face with great conundrums of life, the mystery of human suffering, and we find no way to unravel it. Such situations strip us of all moral illusions like goodness triumphs over evil and is always rewarded, and wickedness is always punished. Thus, we are presented with bleak picture as to how callous, pitiless and unfair life is. Wordsworth has rightly said, 'Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark, and has the nature of infinity.'

As regards the events of Karbala, it could always be argued that these could have been avoided had the Imam not gone to Kufa with only 72 companions. But like all great tragic heroes, Imam's fate was predetermined and he was destined to die and thus to set an example of combating the dark forces of evil under all odd situations and circumstances. It is said that Imam knew it before hand that he was going to die and despite that he decided to fight the evil. This perhaps is inherent in good that it faces evil at all costs. Imam knew beforehand that he would be brutally murdered along with his family members, even then he decided to confront the evil. The reason for his decision was that he wanted to set an example of fighting evil howso strong it may be. Perhaps it is also law of nature that good, however weak,

¹ 'The mark of prostration on his forehead* was set like a diamond,'

fight evil however strong and powerful. Human history and mythology abounds with such examples. Such examples strike a deep chord in our beings and gives us hope that whatever the circumstances and the cost, good will fight evil. These heroes demonstrate a sort of instinct of parental love to humanity. As parents do every thing “to raise their children beyond themselves” so do these heroes. It is because of such heroes that man progresses. “Here,” writes Will Durant “is the biological leverage of human progress, a force more to be trusted than any legislation or any moral exhortation, because it is rooted in the very nature of man... and we grow more completely towards that higher man, who struggles to be born out of our darkened souls. We are the raw material of civilization.”

The common explanation we have heard of human suffering is that man suffers because of sins committed wittingly or unwittingly by him, a sort of retribution and reprisal. This hardly provides adequate explanation for sufferings of innocent, pious and saintly people like Imam Hussain. There is no rational explanation of human sufferings except that man is face to face with the cosmos that is devoid of compassion. Thus man is victim of callous laws of nature. Explaining human suffering in terms of reprisal of sins committed wittingly or unwittingly is an insult to human suffering.

Melody of Clouds (*Sur Sarang*)

Sarang is a Hindi word, having manifold meaning like deer, cuckoo, peacock, pearl, lotus flower, cloud, etc. In Sindhi language Sarang means cloud connoting rainy season. Sarang is also name of one of the popular classical ragas.

In this subcontinent there are many places, where rain is scarce and it is taken as God's mercy. Rainy season is a season of fertility, prosperity, and union of lovers; hence every language, small or big, is rich in poetry and ragas pertaining to rainy season and Sarang are one of such ragas. Sufis have symbolized rain as God's mercy showered on human heart, which is like a wasteland burnt by scorching sunrays and where no plant grows. T. S. Eliot also likens human heart without faith with wasteland. In his poem 'The Waste Land' he expresses his anguished sense that some faith is necessary, that lack of faith has resulted in social disintegration of his time, and that there is some spiritual authority that transcends the historical flux. The true wasteland is not our culture, mechanical and meretricious, as is the proud and barren human heart that needs to obey supernatural command and be touched with a supernatural charity.

Shah has also likened human heart without spirituality to a wasteland and as such he has selected Thar, the desert land of Sindh, for locale of this melody. As the poem opens, we see all around sand starched with sunrays and no trace of water for miles together. The under ground water level is so low that very deep wells are dug to get at it, that water is mostly brackish. In summer, wells dry up and people migrate from place to place in search of water. And then the rainy season sets in and the entire

landscape changes. Shah has painted that landscape in this melody. It is not only landscape of desert in rainy season it is also a panorama of people's pleasures and miseries and spirituality of the poet. In this landscape we see the lush green plains, the paths covered with grass, the beautiful desert damsels strolling along the perfumed paths joyously. Clouds have deluged the plains; the downpour has quenched people's thirst and washed off their sorrows, cuckoo is cooing; farmers with ploughs on their shoulders are going to their fields; herdsmen driving their herds towards grassy plains and are humming happily. Clouds are spread like dark hair of a damsel. The colors of twilight have made motifs on clouds like those of a chunny (stole) of a young desert girl. Flashes of lightening look like blooming of red flowers.

Shah describes beauty of nature in relation to human situation and not for its own sake. The beautiful and young wives, separated from their husbands, are restlessly tossing and turning on their beds and are shivering even under quilts, without warmth of their spouses' body. The poor women are afraid that their huts may leak in rain or may be demolished by the north wind.

Shah is not a realist poet in the modern sense of the term but an idealist spiritualist poet, who treats inner human reality to bring forth to the reader his spirituality, and spiritual realities cannot be separated from physical reality. He treats the ideal but he also treats the reality of inner life, reality of physical desires and grief of their unfulfilment.

The images he creates do not enrich the texture of the poem but are intrinsic to the poem's structure. He does not delight in the physical world for its own sake. He is a poet of magnificent historical imagination and brings variety of past world to life. Some poets achieve a quality of dignified impersonality. They detach themselves from poem when it is completed. One cannot have Shah's poems without having Shah too.

*Those, whose friends are away,
When they see clouds, they sob Convulsively and
remember their lovers,*

*May the huts built by forsaken damsels not get
waterlogged or leak in rain,
If the rainy chilly winds pull down their huts to whom
they should cry out their complaint.
May that their guardians come back and take care of
them.*

*

*When they see clouds, they sob convulsively and
remember their beloveds,
The damsels, delicate like flower buds, tremble on hearing
thunder clouds,
They get so frightened that they cannot utter a word,
They are lonely without their lovers.*

*

*O my beloved, without you I shiver for the entire night,
O the perfect one, I do not get a wink of sleep without
you,
If you came at dawn, I would not mind the cold.*

*

*O my beloved, without your shelter,
I shiver in cold, right from evening,
O you perfect one, without you I shiver even under the
quilt,
I live in a hope that God will bring you back.*

Shah is not only a poet of human soul but also of that which lies below the level of soul, of the human body with its appetite, of the feelings and emotions in their real physical state. The rain has brought prosperity. A young wife is sleeping with her husband on a perfumed wedding bed, horses of high breed are in the courtyard and buffaloes with curved horns are grazing in the plain, huts built on dunes give a beautiful look and she wishes for rain to fall forever:

*High breed horses in the yard, buffaloes of curved horns in
pen,
Huts amidst lush green ground look delightful,
Beloved by my side on a fragranced bridal bed, may it ever
rain,*

Would that I and my beloved be together forever.

The entire desert is reverberating with music of Sarangi, Sarrando and Chung. The clouds shed water only in a rainy season but lover's eyes shed tears in every season. Beautiful girls are wearing crimson dresses and while adjusting bells around necks of the calves, their locks get wet and raindrops glitter like pearls:

*Rainy season has set in, I will dye my dress crimson,
My friend cloud again means to rain,
Adjusting bells around the calves' necks, shepherd-girl's
tresses were drenched,
Sayyad says, come home o beloved and take me into your
care.*

*

*Inside me dense clouds rain, outside there is not a trace of
cloud,
Lightning flashes inside those, who are truly in love,
Those with their lovers beside them, their eyes aren't ever
tearful,*

*

*It rains heavily inside me and so it is outside,
Those whose lovers are beside them their eyes aren't ever
tearful.*

His description of the rainy season and the landscape is brisk, unpretentious, with a sharply visualized style, which has sprung from his soul. And reading the poem one can feel resonance of his personality in every word he uses and in very image he creates. He makes use of his personal experiences and observations of human situation. When describing rainfall he uses words that suggest the falling of rain and the patter of raindrops.

There is no doubt that Shah is a spiritualistic poet, but his spirituality is not that of a fundamentalist, who loves God because he is incapable of loving people. Shah loves people and being a Sufi he considers every human being a manifestation of God. And by loving people, he loves God. His poetry is

expression of human sufferings and miseries, and throughout this melody we see him praying for the well being of people. It makes him happy to see people jubilant on the coming of rain. In the very first stanza of the poem he gives tiding of rain to the tillers:

*"It is cloudy, behold the dense clouds," so says Lateef
"It is raining heavily in big drops, bring out your cattle
herds,
Leave your huts; come out to open plain with all
provisions,
Do not lose hope in God's mercy."*

*

*Clouds have emitted dense vapors towards north,
Clouds spread, they are always there in the season,
Lateef wishes clouds to end miseries of the people,
And pour plenty of water and quench their thirst.*

*

*Lightning flashed in clouds, the village silos would be
filled with grain,
Perceiving beloved's blessings all my sorrows vanished,
May rain fall soon in torrents on lovers.*

*

*It rained on desert, on dry land, on low lying valleys,
Morning reverberates with sound of churning,
Wives of herdsmen are affluent, their hands are full of
butter,
They milk brown buffaloes,
Housewives and their maids are happy in their homes.*

*

*God commanded clouds to embellish for raining,
Flashing clouds arrived and rained in thundering claps,
Those hoarding for high price wring their hands,
Their hope of making fifteen of five is shattered,
Hoarders and miser profiteers may perish,
Herdsmen are again speaking of great showers,
Sayyad says, they all depend on you o Lord.*

As far as my knowledge goes, Shah's Sarang is the longest poem ever written about rain and rainy season in relation to human situation. The other long poem on the same subject I have come across so far is "Megha Duta" (Messenger Cloud) by Kalidas. He composed this poem about twenty centuries before Shah Lateef. The poem is the expression of love of a doting husband who, suffering pangs of separation from his beloved wife, implores the cloud to take his message to her hence the title "Cloud Messenger." It is poem of more than one hundred verses whereas Shah's poem Sarang is of 267 verses. It is said about this poem that, "Kalidas has crowded so many lovely images and a word pictures on a small compass of a poem that the poem seems to contain the quintessence of a whole culture." This is true of Shah Lateef's Sarang as well. Though both the poems are about clouds and rainy season but they are totally dissimilar. Apart from the difference of central idea, there is the difference of personalities of the two poets also. Kalidas was one of the nine jewels of the mighty King Vikramjit. As such his tone and tenor has grandeur of a King's court. Kalidas describes high mountains, high peaks covered with snow, big rivers, castles, kings, queens, gods and goddesses; where as Shah Lateef, being a Sufi and man of downtrodden people, mentions starched plains, dried lakes, small villages, humble huts, small towns. Even expression of his spirituality is humble:

The clouds spread their limbs on the Mausoleum of the holy prophet.

John Millington has written in his preface to the collected poems of Synge, a younger contemporary of Yeats, that: "The poetry of exaltation will always be the highest; but when men loose their poetic feeling for ordinary life, and cannot write poetry of ordinary things, their exalted poetry is likely to lose its strength, in the same way men ceases to build beautiful churches when they have lost happiness in building shops".

In Megha Duta season, places, birds, beasts are used to frame poet's personal emotions but Shah treats nature in relation to sorrows, sufferings, pleasure and happiness of the thirsty and poorly fed desert dwellers. He speaks of particulars in terms of universal and, being a Sufi and a humanist, prays for the

prosperity of desert dwellers, his own homeland and the whole world:

*O lord, bestow prosperity on Sindh for ever,
And shower blessings on the whole world.*

Both the poems are topographical. Doctor Johnson has described topographical poetry as 'a local poetry of which the fundamental subject is some particular landscape to be poetically described with the addition of such embellishment as may be supplied by historical retrospection or incidental meditation.' Kalidas, while telling the cloud the route to, describes various places and their peculiarities, whereas Shah describes places and people to which the clouds have brought happiness and prosperity, and dried lakes which are now filled with rainy water. As both the poems are about clouds and rain, comparison of some of the stanzas may be of some interest:

Sarang

*The clouds of twilight have formed motifs,
Like those on damsel's stole.*

*

Flashes of lightning are like blooming of red flowers.

*

*Clouds like black hair (of a damsel)
Are spread towards the north.*

*

*The lonely young wives separated from their consorts sob
convulsively.*

*

*The damsels delicate like flower buds tremble on hearing
thunder of clouds,
Alone without consorts, in silence they suffer.*

*

*Thunderclouds removed grief of young girls separated
from their lovers.*

*

*Behold, the plains are emitting fragrances,
Young girls stroll along the perfumed paths
Buffaloes bathed in water are running towards pen.*

*

*Young girls are happy, make garlands of flowers
And wearing them round their necks,
O, mates, the rainy season has reminded me of my beloved
I am hopeful that my beloved would come and moisten the
soil.*

Megha Duta

*O cloud, in twilight you would look like a red Gappa
flower.*

*

*The streak of lightning in dark clouds is like streak of gold
on a black touch stone.*

*

The dark clouds look like locks of a beautiful girl.

*

*She is like Chakarwak bird without her life partner.
She is separated from the one with whom she was very
happy
She is withered like a lotus in winter.*

*

*O cloud, don't thunder and don't pour rain, the lonely
damsel may wake up in fear.*

*

*The village young girls look at you with love and
happiness in their eyes,
They will welcome you with a smile as their cattle bathe
in rain,
There is fragrance in their fields and happiness in their
homes.*

*

*O cloud, when you will reach there, the beautiful girls
would adorn themselves,
They wait for their lovers, with their locks in their hands,
Their lovers, who are away, may return to them.*

Musical Interpretation

As stated earlier Sarang is a popular classical raga. According to an Indian musicologist Mr. Gosowami, Sarang was not a name of any particular raga but was an adjective, which was used to denote the category of a raga. Ragas are either Shudh (Pure) or Sankrin (Mixed) Sarang was used for mixed ragas. Sarang in fact is a variation of word Sankirn, meaning mixed raga which came into vogue a little after Bharata and remained so for many centuries afterwards. It was Pandet lochan who, for the first time, used the word Sankara for Sankirn i.e Raaga Sankara or Sankara Raga. Venkata mukhi has used the word Saranga with the same meaning in one or two places and has referred to Saranga Nata. The word Saranga in many places takes the form of Saranka or Salanga all meaning mixed ragas.

I do not agree with Mr. Gosowami. I am of the opinion that Sarang is basically a raga of rain, and rainy season. One of the many meanings of sarang is cloud also. Mostly all the old Asthaaes of Raag Sarang denote rain or rainy season and this supports my contention that Saranga is raga of rain and rainy season. I am also of the opinion that raga Sarang originated in Sindh. Even today the folk songs, particularly marriage songs of Sindh, are sung and many folktales are narrated in the tunes of Raga Sarang, which proves the fact that raga Sarang originated in Sindh.

Melody of Transcending the Transcendence (*SurAasa*)

After melody Aeman it is in melody Aasa that Shah has elaborately spelled out his philosophic thought of oneness of being or, in the words of Ibn Arabi 'Absolute Unification'.

The melody opens with Shah's view of the Absolute:

*I search in limitlessness, and find not limit of the Guide,
Beloved's beauty has no shape,
On our part yearning is limitless and on His part is the
indifference.*

According to Sufis, God is the essence of all existence. Man needs Him so that he may exist and on the other hand God needs man so that He may manifest Himself to Himself. And Shah elaborating this mystic view says:

*'That' is not without 'this,' 'this' too is not without
'that,'
"Man is my secret, and I am his,"¹ I think over it,*

Before coming into phenomenal manifestation human souls existed in God, hence soul is eternal:

There is neither beginning nor end of bondman,

¹ All the saints and scholars have been saying this.

***They transcended transcendence, who had true perception
of the beloved.***

One can transcend his limit only when he effaces his ego. For a Sufi, ego is not a psychic state of narcissism or of being wrapped up in one's self but it is to think that one has objective individuality, and independent entity. When one realizes that he is the phenomenal manifestation of the Divine Essence, his ego is obliterated and he becomes one with the Absolute One:

***No one reached the other side with "I",
"Verily Allah is one and He likes Oneness", burn duality
in all forms,
Shed tears of 'being' before Oneness.***

*

***I cast duality in fire my beloved, transcend me from
myself,
Hold my "I" away from me, it is only you O Lord, whom
"You" suits.***

In Sufi diction, Fana (passing away) and Baqa (endurance) denote different meaning. For a Sufi when a person is absorbed in beloved's thoughts and is not conscious of himself he is in a state of endurance with the beloved and in a state of passing away from himself. Or passing away from one's own personality in realization of the nonexistence of the phenomenal self is endurance:

***Those who abnegated self and were merged in Allah,
They do not observe method of standing, genuflexion and
prostration,
When they were nonexistent only then they reached
existence.***

Sufis also believe that union with God is not eventual meeting the Beloved because craving for union pre-supposes separateness from God whereas there is no separation. And union with God is becoming aware of the relationship that

already exists. What one has to do is to awaken to the realization of his unity with God:

*We ourselves are the one, whom we yearn for,
“Neither begets nor is begotten,” go to him,
From that o connoisseur, you find out the Truth.*

The poem has four chapters. Its second chapter is about eyes. Eyes have always been the favorable subject of poets all over the world and they have produced excellent poetry on the subject. And describing what they feel about beloved's eyes, they have used beautiful and creative poetic similes Eyes are almond like, like that of a deer, they are beautiful, enthralling and mesmerizing. They charm the onlookers and with one glance spell bound them. But in this poem Shah has not described beauty of beloved's eyes but he has portrayed lovers' eyes that all the time yearn for seeing the beloved and having seen him they long to see him again and again. They weep when they do not perceive the beloved and when they see him they are intoxicated, evoked love in them, mesmerized them, robbed them of peace and sleep, and smitten them. The intoxication of love has reddened:

*Eyes perceived something somewhere
They frenzied and were stricken with love,
Sayysd says: since then they have never slept peacefully*

*

*Eyes perceived something yesterday,
Beloved's dazzling beauty reddened them, says Lateef,
They are ravished after seeing the beloved.*

*

*Eyes saw something today,
Beloved showed kindness and they reddened with rapture,
says Lateef*

It was yesterday that they saw the beloved since then they are weeping to see him again and at the same time smiling to see him yet again. More they see him more they are ravished:

*Eyes shed tears as well smile to see the beloved everyday
The more they see the beloved the more ravished they are.*

*

*They shed tears as well smile to see the beloved
They see the beloved many times but still rummage
around for him over and over,
They are never satiated from seeing the beloved again and
again.*

But the real beloved whose reflection is all the mundane beauty that ravishes the lover, cannot be perceived through physical eyes, he can only be perceived when one closes his eyes:

*Don't perceive with the eyes you have in your face,
Seeing with eyes no one comprehended the beloved,
Only they perceived him who closed both the eyes
As said earlier Shah expresses his spiritual love through
physical sensations and sensuousness. The love has
smashed the lover as carder cards cotton
O mother as carder cards cotton, love has carded me in the
same way,
My hands are unable to work, and my limbs have turned
useless.*

It is discussed at many places that Shah did not believe in straight path which is trodden by millions of seekers. He believes in crooked path which is very difficult to follow but which leads to a point that is beyond isness and nothingness as they are only human conjectures and beauty of the beloved is beyond all conjecture:

*Every one guides me on the straight path, there should be
someone to misguide me.
Yearning and acquisition are only half way,
I seek a stage where there is neither isness nor nothing.*

*

*This is also human conjecture that there is neither isness
nor nothing,
The beauty of beloved is beyond all conjecture.*

*

This is again human conjecture that there is nothing,

His purity is beyond all conjecture.

Musical interpretation.

Aasa is a popular classical raga. The literal meaning of the word Aasa is wish and hope. As per an oral tradition Aasa was a name of a princess. She used to get up early in the morning and worship by singing devotional songs. One of the tunes of her songs survived and came into the fold of classical ragas and it was named after the princess' name. This raga is ascribed to Bilawal That. Its ascending and descending notes are:

SA, RE (sharp) MA, DHA (sharp), SA.

SA, NI, DHA (sharp), MA, GA (sharp), SA.

Some musicologist say that Sindhi Aasa is different from classical Aasa. In Sindhi Aasa komal (flat) MA is used and there is difference of Vadi and Samvadi notes also. Vadi and Samvadi notes of Sindhi Aasa are RE and NI whereas Vadi and Samvadi notes of classical Aasa are SA and Ma

Melodies of Coming out of Oneself (*Sur Rip-Barvo*)

It is believed that love is a creative force, an instinct that man has been giving expression to since ancient times in varied ways like poetry, cave carvings (which are poetry in stone), music, rituals, and mythology. Greeks personified love in god Eros, who is erroneously thought to be a sex god, but who, in fact, is image of spiritual, cosmic, and lofty love. Greeks believed that Eros was a magnet that held the entire universe together (Divine Eros and Human Sexuality-Thomas Moor)? C. G. Jung once said: "People think that Eros is sex, but not at all, Eros is relatedness." In Indian mythology god Kama, meaning desire, is love-god, a beautiful and artistic expression of love in the form of god. He is also known with other epithets. He is young and handsome with a bow of sugarcane strung with rows of bees, and his arrows are flowers. In Rig Veda he is described as the first born of the primeval chaos and is personification of cosmic desire. The oldest record of love poems, written about three thousand years back, has been found in Egypt. Love poems were written in ancient India and Greece also. In India Kalidasa, a Sanskrit poet, composed marvelous love poetry, and Greece produced love poets like Sappho and Archilochus. And about a century later Chinese poets published anthology of love and courtship poems known as *Shi Jing*.

Poetry of Renaissance's poets abounds with love passions. It is believed that love poetry has played important role in uplifting woman's status in a society where she was a property and vassal of man. Poets praised her beauty, idealized her and claimed to give their life for her and thus they raised her to an

elevated pedestal. No doubt she got high social status but she was not an individual, only a beautiful sex object¹.

Mystic poets also composed love poetry and expressed their passions in female persona. They articulated their divine love in secular and mundane imagery 'not through out-of-body experiences, but through physical desires, and experiences.' It is said that Mahadeviyakka, the twelfth century Kannada poetess, brought into vogue the concept of the god as an illicit lover. She laments about the unrequited love and its suffering, and the pain of such involvement:

*O mother! I burnt in a flameless fire,
O mother! I suffered a bloodless wound.*

In mystic love poetry physical desires and hunger are transformed into spiritual cosmic and lofty love. God and man's relations are described with the metaphor of physical love between man and woman. Religious literature is rich in such metaphors. The 'Song of Songs' in the Old Testament with its vivid erotic imagery of divine-human relations, is illustrative of it:

*Let him kiss me with kisses of his mouth!
For your love is better than wine,
Your anointing oils are fragrant,
Your name is perfume poured out.*

Famous Muslim mystic saint Rabia Basery said:

*Each lover is with his love,
Here I am alone with you.*

In mystic love poetry all expressions of physical love and body language like gazing, touching, kissing and embracing are suggestive and denote something more than and different from physical love. The physical beauty of a beloved leads a Sufi to spiritual heights bringing his body and soul together. For instance, Shah has described beauty of Moomal, the heroine of his melody 'Moomal Rano,' so beautifully, brilliantly and

¹ Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theories- J. A. Cuddon.

elaborately that while reading it one feels holiness of her physical beauty as well as its sensuality. Sensuality and holiness both are blended and body and soul are completely merged together. Sufis believe that love enlarges and expands the lover. It brings us out of ourselves by awakening deepest emotions. It makes us trust others and by doing that it gives new meaning to our life. It is thus an affirmation of life. It takes us out of status quo. Anne Carson says, "Love takes us from here to there. When we long for some one or something we are being invited to make a move, to sour in spirit out of the status quo and into a new world." Some one has rightly said that love introduces to beauty's soul and soul's own beauty."

Generally in all love poetry, and particularly in mystic poetry, beloved is portrayed as callous, indifferent and narcissistic. Being narcissistic, he is unable to relate himself to anyone other than himself and as such he is empty inside. We all know the mythological story of a beautiful lad who fell in love with himself. This self-love was a punishment for the lad Narcissus for his cruel ways to the girls, who fell in love with him and for his being a scorner of love. Gods' verdict was that, "May he who loves not others love himself." And when he experienced his own sufferings in love he realized the sufferings of those who fell suffered in his love. Hence he said, "Now I know what others have suffered from me, for I burn with love of my own self."

It is said that the narcissistic person elicits love of others and ravishes in the intoxicating experience of someone being in love with him. He derives pleasure from being indifferent and callous to his lover and he thus fills his inner emptiness. Hence he is stagnant and remains permanently frozen in unrequited love.² Contrarily the lover grows in love, his love escalates with beloved's indifference and, in fact, the secret of lover's enduring love is the awareness of the fact that he will never be able to own his love-object. The intensity of love and pangs of unrequited love purifies and sublimates him spiritually and eventually he reaches a stage where his love-object is left behind, his mundane

² "Echo and Narcissus" *The Mythic Journey*-Liz Greene and Juliet Sharman- Burk.

love takes another form and through the medium of human beauty he glimpses eternal beauty. The temporal luster leads him to the primordial luster but he expresses his craving of primordial love in terms of mundane love. De Musset says,

“All men are liars, traitors, babblers, hypocrites, stutters, all women are vain, ratified, and perfidious ---but there is in the world one thing holy and sublime, and that is the union of these two imperfect beings.”

These two melodies of Shah, Rip and Barvo, are purely love poems. Rip means calamity and catastrophe. In all love poetry love is mostly portrayed as an overwhelming force that renders the lover helpless. Sometimes it prevails over his consciousness and drives him to lunacy. It is attributed to the working of fate, which afflicts men and women with uncontrollable love passion and brings destruction on them. As such, love is thought to be a source of destruction. It is because of such concept of love that title of Shah's poem is Rip. Love is also thought to be soul's response to beauty and is God-inspired.

Like all love poems in these poems also the beloved is narcissistic, callous and sadist:

*You are my lord beloved, I am merely a servant,
Clasping my hands I do obeisance to you,
I will not leave your door even for a moment my friend,
Never ever deprive me of your grace my love.*

* *

*O dear! There is always yearning for you in my heart,
Pick a knife, cut my limbs, hesitate not,
If you glance at me with favor I will take as a great good
turn (Barvo).*

*

*My love! It is not fair to kill first and then be indifferent,
I pine for you and not a drop of blood is left in my body,
I have been secretly inquiring about you. (Barvo)
Both poems are expression of the distress of a lover whose
consort has gone abroad and she is lamenting for him:
Ever since beloved embarked on a journey,
I have no peace at night and no rest at day,
I will sacrifice myself for the beloved for millions times,*

It is all God's wish otherwise I would have made all efforts for his union.

It is winter and she is alone, passing chilly winter nights without him:

***It is extreme cold; I have no quilt, no mattress,
Neither my consort is here, nor I have enough energy to
bear the cold, my youth is wasted,
What could be their condition whose wretched huts are
without support. (Rip)***

*

***Fierce are blowing northern cold winds, I have no quilt, no
mattress,
Only they feel the cold whose huts are dilapidated. (Rip)***

*

***Fierce northern cold winds blew; I have no quilt, no
mattress,
Pulling four sides of coverlet over my body, I spent night.
(Rip)***

Shah believes that the anguish of love ennoble the lover and he is spiritually elevated. It takes him to God whom Shah calls Pireen, the Beloved. Hence the love-smitten damsel is happy to observe that her anguish of love has not diminished but is more than yesterday:

***Every moment I console my heart, but it is not consoled
even for a moment.
The more I try more it grieves.***

*

***Stop not worrying about the beloved, sleep not peacefully
my heart!
Beloved's yearning is more intense today than yesterday.***

*

***Heart melts, mourns, is never quite,
Remembers the beloved whom it cherished.***

*

***People demand wealth, I demand beloved every day,
I forfeit forthwith the whole world for the friend,
Mere mention of his name pleases me, what to talk of
seeing him. (Baroo)***

*

*Luring my heart the beloved wielded his hold over it and
took it away,
He fastened it with a brittle thread,
He entwined it and my heart is now in his control. (Barvo)*

*

*Ever since my acquaintance with the beloved,
He is not out of mind even for a moment,
He is staying in my heart and has made it his abode
(Barvo)*

Shah lived in an agrarian society. Being true to the spirit of his time and his land he has adeptly drawn symbols from agrarian rural life. Each image is integrated with appropriate metaphor, simile and figures of speech, mystic secular thought and music:

*As in rainy season grass shoots out from barren land,
Grief burgeons in heart while beloved is away.*

*

*Heart is restless like a grazing camel herd,
I did not tie love relationship with beloved to sever it.*

*

*Beloved is multihued; soft like embroidered silken bodice,
How can I forget him who has made me euphoric?*

*

*As are manifold knots in the oar,
So are anxieties in my heart for meeting the beloved.*

*

*As water drawn by the Persian wheel from well is mixed
with sand and can not be separated from it,
So is my heart inseparable from the beloved.*

*

*As smith entwines rings of a chain,
So has my beloved entwined my heart. (Barvo)*

Rain-laden clouds of beloved's memory have engulfed her. Beloved's love has inundated her and her eyes have been raining incessantly. She cries for the beloved to come and take care of her. She makes up her mind to relate her sufferings to him, but

when she meets him she finds herself dumb and forgets every thing. Her sinews vibrate like violin cords. The pain of beloved' separation is constant like a pain of a fractured bone:

*Clouds are in my mind and eyes stop not raining,
Today my beloved rained in my heart and inundated it,
Come beloved, take care of me; I am a love smitten damsel.*

*

*I will relate all my sufferings to him,
But when I meet him I forget all my grievances.*

The suffering of separation and anguish of love should not be shared with any one because the hidden fire of love bakes lover's heart:

*Give vent to your grief in secret; make it not public with
tears,
Endure it silently till you find the curer.*

*

*Weep secretly; disclose not your grief when beloved is not
there,
O my heart! Grief will make you strong like the roots of
lotus plant.*

*

*Why not cover your love as the potter covers pots in a
kiln?*

*If, with exposure, fire looses heat how will the pots be
baked?*

And seek guidance from the potters.

*

*Why do you not cover your love again and again,
If with exposure fire looses heat how will the pots be
baked,*

You also do what potters are doing.

*

*Learn o my dear friend! The way of love from kiln,
All day it is on fire, its vapor comes not outside.*

She did not meet her beloved and could not relate her sorrows to him. At the same time her heart's secrets have grown in her heart like a wild jungle as has no one to share them with:

*Beloved met me not, whom I share my heart's secrets with?
Love secrets have sprouted in my heart like grass on the
riverain fertile soil.*

*

*The love secrets grew out-and-out like trees in riverain
fertile island,
I did not share with others and beloved met me not.*

Shah like all oriental poets exaggerates while describing beloved's beauty by using metaphor, simile and hyperbolic language:

*When my beloved walks with grace,
The very ground greets him by saying "In the name of
Allah" and kisses the path,
Hurries reverently are engrossed in amazement,
I swear by Allah, my beloved is most beautiful among all.*

Shah's concept of love is medieval. It is unconditional, humble, self-negating and involves a sort of masochistic devotion to the beloved. It reminds us the feudal concept of salvage to an overlord. This concept of love may not go well with a society, which has 'left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous-"cash payment"'. Personal relations, family bonds, love, friendship, neighborly and community ties, all became tintured or corrupted by commercial self-interest'. This society that has given birth to a modern man, a brute, untamed, and uncultivated being. It has strengthened individual's natural tendencies for self seeking, self satisfaction, self preservation, and self aggrandizement. Some one has rightly said: "It is nihilism not in the sense of formless chaos, rather, in the Nietzschean sense of the devaluation of the highest values." In this present human predicament humanity needs love poetry like that of Shah Lateef which will bring the modern man out of his spiritual status quo, swamp of his narcissism and enlarge and ennoble him.

Melody of Seekers (*Sur Khahori*)

Khahori means snake charmers, who earn their livelihood by charming and catching snakes. They stay away from their homes for days together and travel around in mountains and woods to catch snakes. They subsist on wild fruit, which is as difficult to obtain, as it is difficult to catch snakes. Their life is very hard and their profession requires much physical labor. They get up at midnight, fill their leather bags with water, proceed to mountains, and roam about from place to place. In the day they journey and at night they sleep on stony ground:

*Khahoris girded up their loins early morning,
Tracking mountains they became dust with dust,
Putting their bodies to hardships, they eventually found
extremity of the range.*

*

*I saw seekers, who rest not even for a while,
They explore mountains for wild fruit in extreme heat,
Having obtained it, they happily hum in forest.*

Their life is like those of world renouncers and Shah has equated them with ascetics and the wild fruit that they seek and gather with salvation that the ascetics seek. Hence this Sur is thematically continuum of melody Ramkali:

*I saw seekers, who stay not at home,
In bitter cold, they shed tears for God,
Miserably they live and obtain wild fruit.*

*

*I saw seekers, who never rest,
They destroy their bodies and obtain wild fruit.*

Their profession of charming snacks is also meaningful. Serpent is religious icon of temptation. It was serpent that tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge.

As the poem opens we meet Khahoris repeating God's name inaudibly. It is called Dhikr Khafi. It is a Muslim way of remembering God and meditating. God says in Quran "You remember me and I remember you." As such Zikr is as important for Muslims as five times prayer. And Shah tells us that Khahoris have crossed limitlessness of space and time with Dhikr Khafi. This has made them cognizant that God is not in Mecca, Kaashi or any other sacred religious place but He is everywhere and in every one:

*The Khahoris sought the Glorified by secretly repeating
His name,
With such words they crossed spacelessness,
They, who were fully baked, became one with the One,
And perceived the Glorified everywhere.*

Mostly followers of all religions practice dhikr. Hindus' dhikr is called *Mantras* and two mantras, *Aham Brahma asmi* ("I am Brahman" in the *Brihadaranyaka Up.* 1,4,10) and *Tat tvam asi* ("You are that" in the *Chandogya Up.* 6,8-15), are very important meditation formulas. And the third one is the sacred syllable *OM (AUM)* that is said to exert a powerful influence on the one who knows how to use it and understands its metaphysical significance. This syllable is considered a bow and one's self, indeed, is the arrow. Brahman is spoken of as the target of that. It is to be hit without making a mistake. Thus one "becomes united with it as the arrow 'becomes one with the target.' (*Mundaka Upanishad* (2,2,4))

As regards Buddhist dhikr there are two complementary types of Buddhist meditation: calm meditation (*samatha*) and insight meditation (*vipassana*). The first is aimed at producing deep concentration (*samadhi*) by developing a capacity of the

mind to rest undisturbed on a single object of perception. The second aims at understanding the true nature of things, which is characterized by impermanence, suffering and no-self. In other words, calm meditation is about controlling the defilements of the mind, while insight meditation is about letting them go completely as a result of understanding the nature of the world.

With dhikr one's nature is cultivated and "by cultivating one's nature one will return to virtue. When virtue is perfect, one will be one with the Beginning. Being one with the Beginning, one becomes vacuous, and being vacuous, one becomes great. One will then be united with the sound and breath of things. When one is united with the sound and breath of things, one is then united with the universe. This unity is intimate and seems to be stupid and foolish. This is called profound and secret virtue, this is complete harmony."¹

It appears that there were some hamlets and settlements of ascetics in Ganjo hills in the south of Hyderabad Sindh, and the ascetics of these hamlets were popular for their spirituality among the people and whoso learnt about them rushed to the Ganjo hills putting all his worldly engagements aside:

*They, who had an inkling of the Ganjo hill hamlet,
Became restless,
Abandoning their fields and crops, they became Lahootis*

*

*They, who learnt about Ganjo hill shrine,
Closed all books, they searched and became Lahootis.*

*

*They, whom dust of Ganjo hill hamlet touched,
They gave up their deep sleep, they searched and became
Lahootis.*

Khhahoris were the ascetics of Ganjo hills and spiritually they had reached a place where even birds could not reach and it is there that they picked wild fruit from the trees and one could see there the flickering of Khahoris' fire:

¹ Chuang Tzu 12

***There is no such place any where in this world where birds
cannot reach,
Khahoris reached there and picked wild fruit from the
trees.***

*

***The place where bird cannot reach, there flickers fire,
Who else could kindle fire there except a band of Khahoris.***

In the third chapter we meet Khahahoris, who have deliberately given up the straight path. In Sufi diction they are called Malamatis. A famous Sufi Abdul Rehman Sulami, has said, "If the Apostolate was not abandoned once for all a Malamatiya saint would have been entrusted with the office." And in Hindu mystic thought they are called Tantarics, who believe in achieving spiritual salvation through sense pleasure, which, according to Hindu religious dictates, is sin.

Nothing can be said as to which is the unconventional path for Shah. He only describes those seekers, who reach the goal by following that path:

***Those, who exploring the mountains, lost the right path,
What they discovered on unconventional path,
Others don't find that on the beaten track,***

*

***Forsaking both the worlds they ask not for a path,
They smear their bodies with dust for their beloved,
Assuredly they have some knowledge of Lahoot.***

In Sur Ramkali Shah tells the seeker not to seek and search without candle as millions have been lost in darkness without the candle (guide):

***Seeking is arduous, seek not without candle,
Be in friend's chamber so far as he is there,
Leave his place when he leaves it.***

*

***Seek not without candle, seeking is very arduous,
Millions are blinded by darkness.***

*

*What you took for candle, is in fact sunshine,
For the blind it is darkness even when if night ends and
sun rises.*

But in this melody Shah advises the seeker not to seek any guide but follow the path of Awais Qarni, who did not accept any middleman on the path of salvation:

*Go not near beaten track, follow the unconventional path,
Overcoming all sufferings and become Awesi.*

*

*Some stepped on the crooked path in old age,
Where commoners are confused, the dear ones are happy,
It is only a few from amongst the millions, who discover
secret of that place.*

*

*They went off from the crooked path and heard the
unheard,
I have just seen such seekers.*

It reminds one of Sudhartha's advice to his disciple: 'you must be lamps unto yourselves. Rely on yourselves, and do not rely on external help. Hold firm to the truth as a lamp and a refuge, and do not look for refuge to anything beside yourselves. A brother becomes his own lamp and refuge by continually looking on his body, feelings, perceptions, moods, and ideas in such a manner that he conquers the cravings and depressions of ordinary men and is always strenuous, self-possessed, and collected in mind. Whoever among my disciples does this, either now or when I am dead, if he is anxious to learn, he will reach the summit².

² Digha Nikaya 2,99-100

Melody of Discovering Lord in Nothingness (*Sur Ramkali*)

Ramkali is one of the longest poems of Shah Abdul Lateef Bhittai. It is about ascetic yogis who forsake world, abandon all worldly comforts, earthly ties, desires of their heart, and are wandering in wilderness in search of Brahma, the Absolute, the ultimate Reality, to become one with the One, and thus realize immortality in mortality. As regards origin of the word asceticism, it is said that it is derived from the Greek word Askeein meaning to work, to exercise, to train. 'The athlete was one trained, and one might be athlete in virtue' 'So very early athlete became the spiritual athlete of Church.' And thus the word denotes two different concepts. One is to train the body for some purpose, "sacrifice to God" says William James "and as a means of training the will". The other is to mortify and destroy the body for achieving union with God.

Primitive man, when faced some natural calamity, interpreted it as anger of demons and gods, and thought it could only be warded off by offering sacrifices to them, particularly of most precious and dear things. Abraham's sacrifice of his son was continuity of that old tradition. And when there was a collective calamity, which threatened the community with extinction, they even offered human sacrifices. And during drought and famine, people fasted for long periods, thinking that with starvation the demons and gods would be conciliated. And thus there evolved many methods of physical mortification,

which finally led people to believe that mortification makes the devotee dear to gods and he achieves spiritual elevation. This thinking gave rise to spiritualistic asceticism and many methods of body mortification. All those methods, which were used for conciliating gods, were later adopted for attainment of righteousness and spiritual heights. Thus world flight degrees became the standard of holiness. Consequently people started believing that body was inherently evil in which soul was imprisoned, and the purpose of life was to make all efforts and use all physical disciplinary methods to release the soul from the dualism "which separates soul and body, God and world, material and spiritual, into sharply contrasted realities, and life is looked at more or less as the struggle for the supremacy and the ultimate victory of spirit to the extinction of material and lower elements." Once some one asked an ascetic, as to why he was torturing his body, he replied, 'Because it is torturing me.' And with passage of time the objective of spiritual exercises became not only training but also destroying the body. Practice of asceticism is not confined to particular areas or places. It is practiced all over the world particularly in India where it is very old and highly developed. Many scholars have tried to find the reasons for its growth and development in Asia, particularly India, Persia and Egypt. They say that the 'Geographical and racial factors have exposed the populations of Persia, India, and Egypt to a long succession of oppressive tyrannies by physically superior but often mentally and spiritually inferior races. The Orient has hence become ground for religions of despondency or even despair (Schopenhauer as quoted by T.C.Hall). "And the forms of this asceticism are those of world-flight, the hermit life, the mortification of the body by unnatural inhibitions of all its desires". They assert that in comparison to Indian asceticism, character of Greek asceticism is philosophic as it is based on contemplation rather than on mortification. The way of salvation was escape from the body by pure thought. 'Even for Aristotle, higher life is open only to the man of pure speculative activity.'

In my opinion this is an erroneous assumption. Indian asceticism had developed during Indus Valley civilization when there were no oppressive tyrannies and people were living in

peace and tranquility. At a later stage, after arrival of Aryans, a new philosophical thought evolved and the seekers of knowledge and wisdom sought knowledge 'which the four Vedas could not give' by adopting ascetic life. "Thus the growth of asceticism is not only a measure of psychological uncertainty of the times, but also of their thirst for knowledge. It is not just to India to stigmatize her ancient wisdom as mere life-negation."¹

Indian ascetics produced great philosophical works like Upanishads, and founded great religions like Jainism, Buddhism besides many minor religious sects. Vardhamana Mahaveera Jaiveer, the founder of Jain religion, was an ascetic. He practiced and preached nudity and made it part of his religious sect. He wandered for twelve years in search of truth wearing a single garment but after thirteen months he put that garment aside saying that the universe was his garment which covers his nudity. After thirty years of wandering, he found the truth and preached it for thirteen years, remaining nude unto death. His followers are called Nirgrantha Nagas meaning nudes without bonds, and like their Guru they wander nude from place to place, begging their food, meditating and subjecting their body to austerities of all kind. Vardhamana was an atheist and did not believe in a personal deity who has created this universe and maintains it and will finally destroy it. He believed that the universe is functioning only according to natural laws and is eternal. He preached that for obtaining salvation 'one must give up all trammels, including clothes. Only by a long course of fasting, self-mortification, study and meditation one can rid oneself of karma (actions), and only by the most rigorous discipline can he prevent fresh karma from clinging to his soul. Hence a monastic life is essential for salvation". Mahaveer starved himself to death and Jain monks try to follow his example. He prohibited his followers from destroying life even of insects. A Jain is supposed to strictly abjure:

1-killing,

2-Lying,

¹ A. L. Basham

3-Sexual activity,

4- Possessing property.

According to Mahaveer, soul is bright but our Karmas darken it. The obfuscation of the soul is compared to the gradual clouding of a bright oily surface by motes of dust.

The great cotemporary of Mahaveera was Buddha who, abandoning his princely life, adopted life of ascetic and in his spiritual sojourn he practiced all severe ascetic methods of salvation. Ascetics believe that if problem of life is pain, then let us suffer it and put ourselves to much pain and thus overcome it. And thus we will set ourselves free from the fear and anxiety of pain. Buddha, having undergone the severe exercises, realized that asceticism is not the way to achieve release from pain and anxiety. Hence he expounded a method that was a middle way between asceticism and worldly life. According to him, Dukkha is inherent in ordinary life; it is due to craving for individual satisfaction; it can only be stopped by stopping that craving; and that can only be done by taking a middle course between self-indulgence and extreme asceticism and leading a moral and well-ordered life."²

Then we meet two other ascetic philosophers Gosala Makariputra and Ajita Kesakambalin (Ajita of the hair-blanket, he was so called because of his garb of hair-blanket). Gosala was an atheist and founded the sect of nude ascetics. He did not believe in Karma theory, according to which man's present condition is determined by his past actions and man can influence his present, future, and his entire destiny by choosing the right course of conduct. Gosala rejected this theory and said that some impersonal cosmic principle, which he called Niyati, means destiny, has conditioned and determined to the smallest detail the whole universe. He said, "All that have breath, all that are born, all that have life, are without power, strength or virtue, but are developed by destiny, chance and nature, and experience joy and sorrow in the sixth class (of existence). Whatever efforts man makes he cannot change the course of events and influence

² Basham

his life. His monks, though atheists, practiced severe asceticism arguing that it was because that way of their life was predetermined and the force of destiny compelled them to do so. Their religious opponents accused them of licentiousness and immorality.³

Ajita Kesakambalin also founded a separate sect of monks. He was materialists, atheist and also determinist. His followers renounced world and lived in groups in forests but his contemporary ascetics considered his asceticism without any purpose.

While Indian asceticism was highly philosophical, Greek asceticism was only a philosophical attitude. It was less ascetic and more a back-to-nature attitude, which formed basis of 'back-to-nature' movement that "arose in the fifth-century Athens as a reaction of maladjustment to an irksomely complex civilization". The purpose of Greek ascetic philosophy known as Cynic philosophy was 'to reduce the things of the flesh to bare necessities in order that the soul may be as free as possible.' The exponents of Cynic's asceticism were against private property and all sorts of possessions. They also believed that aim of life is happiness which could be achieved not in pursuit of pleasure but in a simple and natural life, 'independent as far as possible of all external aids'. 'A modest and virtuous life is the only road to abiding content. Wealth destroys peace, and envious desire, like rust, eats away the soul'. Virtue consists in eating, possessing, and desiring as little as possible, drinking only water, and injuring no one'. Aristippus, the exponent of hedonism, said that one should possess property so that he could satisfy all his sensuous desires. Hence his historic aphorism, "I possess, but am not possessed". But Antisthenes, the exponent of Cynic philosophy said, "I do not possess in order not to be possessed." He had no property and his only possession was the ragged cloak, which he wore all the time. But though they had denounced luxuries and exhibitionistic way of life and had adopted a life of asceticism, they took pride in their humility and exhibited smugness in their poverty. They were

³ Basham

self-consciously proud of their poverty and their simple way of living was a way of advertising as to how spiritual ascetics they were. And once Socrates, seeing Antisthenes' worn out cloak with holes twitted him "I can see your vanity, Antisthenes, through the holes of your cloak."

And the cynic philosopher Diogenes, who, when asked by Alexander as to what he could do for him, had replied, "Stand out of the sun." Having had become next to Alexander the most famous man in Greece, he was considered 'something of a poseur, and evidently relished his renown'.

We are told that Greek Cynicism developed during Socrates' lifetime. Antisthenes was his disciple and was fascinated by Socrates' simple living, his indifference to himself and to the world, and his denouncing of worldly possessions. Hence after Socrates' death he propagated ascetic life declaring poverty a virtue. He established his separate school of philosophy known as Cynic philosophy. Diogenes was his first pupil. He had become destitute and had been begging from actual want. After meeting Antisthenes he was happy to learn that begging was also a virtue and wisdom. He was the first cynic, who 'adopted the beggar's garb, wallet, and staff, and for a time made his home in a tub or cask in the court of the temple of Cybele at Athens'. They were ascetics only in the sense that they had renounced luxurious living, suppressed desires but did not believe in mortifying body in a way the Indian ascetics did. Austerity and simple living is not asceticism. It is to be connected either

(a) With a disciplinary process for the attainment of righteousness,

Or (b) With complete negation of the body by its mortification'.

Unlike Indian ascetics, who believed in curbing their sexual desire cynics accepted it as a natural urge like hunger and 'professed themselves unable to understand why men should be ashamed to satisfy the one appetite like the other, in public.' They avoided marriage as external bond, but patronized prostitution. Diogenes advocated free love and a community of

wives, and 'Antisthenes, seeking independence in every thing, complained that he could not satisfy his hunger as solitarily as he could assuage his lust'. Contrary to this attitude Indian ascetics practices Brahmcaria, which is voluntary control of the sexual impulses

As said earlier Greek asceticism developed after Socrates but Indian asceticism is as old as the Indus Valley civilization. It was a way of spiritual and scholarly life of Indus people. They did not build temples in cities and villages but went for worship to forests. Temples were forest institutions where priests lived for meditation in seclusion and serene atmosphere. People went to forests for worship, meditation, and seeking guidance from the priests. It was in this period that asceticism and yoga developed and scholars admit that 'one of the greatest contributions of the Harappans is the Yoga. Several terracotta human figures depicted in yoga posture have been recovered from Harrapa, Mohenjodaro and Chanhudaro. The Indus seals also show the gods seated in yogic posture. Even the beasts seem to have been tamed by yogic powers is hinted on seal No.303 from Mohenjodaro (pl.CXVII)⁴. The yoga postures of gods are said to be the various postures of god Siva, who was primarily an Indus god and was later borrowed by the invading Aryans and incorporated in Vedic religion. The horned ithyphallic god of Mohenjodaro, surrounded by animals, may well be the prototype of Siva as the patron of reproduction in men, animals and plants.' It was in Gupta times that holy trinity (Trimurti) of Hinduism was devised and Siva became one of the three major Hindu gods. Siva is the patron deity of ascetics. 'He is presented with his long hair entwined in a top-knot, crescent moon is fixed in the knot and Ganga River flows from his hair. In middle of his forehead is his third eye symbolizing his insight in all the cosmic mysteries and his superior wisdom⁵. As per myth he churned deadly poison from the cosmic ocean and drank it, which scared his neck black. He is lord of snakes, which encircle his neck and arms. His body is smeared with ashes and it is in the tradition of

⁴ Dawn and Development of the Indus Civilization-by S.R.Rao

⁵ Bashame

Siva that ascetics smear their bodies. He, seated on tiger skin at the high slopes of the Himalayan Mount Kailasa, is deep in meditation and the world is maintained through his meditation. In Hindu religion we find that nearly all the Saivaite gods are non-Vedic, particularly deities Kali or Durga and Ayyappan. These deities were worshipped in forests and groves and in some parts of South India the temple of these deities is called Kavu meaning forests or groves.

It was during Vedic period that Aryans started building temples in towns, villages and homes. But at a later stage we find Vedic priests back in forests and composing there highly intellectual and scholarly discourses called Upanishads. Buddha found Truth in forest and Mahaveera too wandered in forests.

The Indus asceticism was part of the fertility cult and there is mention of a class of Vratya ascetics in Vedas, who practiced fertility-cult asceticism. 'They traveled from place to place in a cart, with a woman who prostituted, and a musician who performed at the rituals of dance and flagellation⁶.

Besides achieving salvation and spiritual elevation, the purpose of asceticism was to obtain supernatural power, which could be acquired through rigorous discipline, meditation, and inuring body to pain, privation and torture. The more usual object of Tapas, according to Vedas, was the attainment of magical powers. But Buddha denied it and told an ancient legend of the failure of certain Rsis to blast by curses a seer who exclaimed that their Tapas was proved futile and their discipline fruitless. With these two purposes of achieving salvation and obtaining supernatural power the asceticism of mortifying body developed. Hence there emerged a class of wandering ascetics who were free of all worldly ties and responsibilities. Their only responsibility was to acquire magical power and for that they exposed themselves 'to hunger, thirst, and extremities of seasons, sitting near the blazing fire in the hot sun, lying on a bed of spikes, hanging downwards from the tree for hours together, holding arms motionless above their heads until they became misshapen'. After these exercises an ascetic was able to

⁶ Basham

acquire that power with which 'he could see through the time, there was no time division for him, no past and no future. As he could see beyond time and space he could, therefore, predict the coming events and his predictions were always accurate and true. With his power he could destroy his enemies, save people from natural calamities and could crumble mountains into the sea, and burn up enemies with a glance of his eyes⁷.

There were other ascetics called Munis meaning the silent ones. "They wear the wind as girdle, and who, drunk with their own silence, rise on the winds and fly in the paths of demigods and birds. They know all men's thoughts for they have drunk the magic cup of Rudra, an archer god whose arrows brought disease, and a guardian of healing herbs. His magic cup is poison to ordinary mortals."

*When all desires, which cling the heart, fall away
Then the mortal becomes immortal,
And in this life finds Brahman.*

*When all the earthly ties of the heart
are sundered,
Then the mortal becomes immortal.
This is the end of all instructions*

It were the ascetics, who propounded various worldly and spiritual philosophies and thus played important role in the development of Indian philosophical thought. As they lived alone in forests meditating on mysteries of life, death and the universe, every one reached different conclusions; hence every thinker expounded different philosophy.

Yoga is one of the ascetic philosophies. It is a Sanskrit word denoting spiritual discipline and all religious exercises and acts of self-mortification in which direct awareness and union with God or Ultimate Reality is the main focus. It is believed that there is knowledge inaccessible to human understanding or sense-experience, but attainable through disciplinary practices,

⁷ Basham

in expanded state of consciousness. And these disciplinary practices are spoken of collectively as Tapas or Tapasia. Tapasia is from the root Tap meaning to be hot, to burn and to glow. It indicates effort and endeavor for concentrating energies of mind and the senses and that sort of Tapasia is considered virtue, rather supreme virtue, in Upanisads. One who practices Tapasia is called Yogi. But generally whoso practices self-mortification or renounces the world is called Jogi or Yogi. The basic text of this school is said to be 'Yoga Sutra' of Patanjali, a famous grammarian of 2nd century B.C. The intellectual contents of the Yoga Sutra are largely based on the philosophy of Samkhya system (Dershna) with the difference that Samkhya is atheistic whereas Yoga is a theistic system. The followers of Yoga system believe in God and call Him Isvara who, according to them, 'is not a creator but an especially exalted soul that has existed for all eternity without ever being enmeshed in matter.' He is the model for the aspirant to spiritual release and is symbolized in the sacred syllable Om. Yoga, like Samkhyas, holds that achievement of spiritual liberation occurs when Self (Purusha) is freed from the bondages of matter (Pirakrity) that has resulted because of ignorance and illusion (Avidya and Maya). "The Samkhya view of the evolution of the world through identifiable stages leads Yoga to an attempt to reverse this order, as it were, so that a person can increasingly dehumanize himself until the self reenters its original state of purity and consciousness." When the aspirant, with his spiritual discipline achieves the stage, where he can control and suppress obscuring activities of his mind and disentangle himself from material objects, he enters Samadhi, which is a state of deep concentration and thus enters blissful ecstatic union with the ultimate reality.

There was a prescribed psychical training course, which was divided into eight stages and was called Raja-yoga, which means royal yoga.

1-Yama-Selfcontrol: non-violence, truthfulness, not stealing, chastity and avoidance of greed.

2-Niyama-observance: Purity, contentment, austerity, study of the Vedas, devotion to God.

3-*Asana*-Posture: Certain sitting posture was necessary for meditation. The famous posture is *Padamasana* “Lotus Posture.” Gods and sages are depicted in this posture.

4-*Paranyama*-Control of the breath: breath is held and controlled and respiration is forced into unusual rhythms.

5-*Pratyahara*-Restraint: the sense organs are trained not to take note of their perceptions.

6-*Dharna*-Steadying of the mind: concentration on a single object.

7-*Dhiyana*-Meditation: to fill the whole mind with object of concentration.

8-*Samadhi*-Deep meditation: when the whole personality is temporarily dissolved.

Some times this system is also called *Kundalini yoga*. It is thought that there is a serpent power that lies at the base of ones spiritual spine, which with complicated psychic exercises is raised through certain *charkas* or centers until it enters brain.

There are other forms of yoga also. Some of them are:

Mantra-yoga (Yoga of spells). In this system the aspirant is taught certain words and phrases and is asked to continually repeat them silently or loudly. Since ancient times it is believed that if certain words are chanted in a particular style, they will produce the desired results.’ The aspirant succeeds in dissociating consciousness and reaches the state, which is called *Jnana*. In the state of *Jnana* “one is clearly awake and aware of the world as it is, as distinct from the world as it is described. In other words, in the state of *Jnana*, you stop thinking. You stop talking to yourself and figuring and symbolizing to yourself what is going on. You simply are aware of what is and no body can say what it is, because as *Korzibski* well said, ‘The real world is unspeakable.’ There is a lovely double take in that. But that is *Jnana*...where one practices to sit absolutely wide awake with eyes open, without thinking⁸.

⁸ Alan Watts

Mostly in every religion there are certain sacred and secret words or spells. In Buddhism it is called Mantrayana meaning the way of spells. It is said in Hindu Upanishads that the world is the creation of sound meaning vibrations and the sacred word OM is that sound which all Hindus and Buddhists chant to invoke meditative state. "When you say OM you begin at the back of your throat with O, and you finish at your lips, so you take in the whole range of world-creating sound. All universe is Brahman of which OM is the sound symbol. The self is Brahman. But some religious scholars say that mantras are meaningless words, OM is completely senseless. The purpose of repeating such nonsense is to liberate oneself from the notion that universe is real.

b-Hatha-yoga (Yoga of Force): In this system certain methods of physical exercise like some special acrobatic exercises and some difficult postures of lotus positions of curling one's legs around one's head etc, are taught to the aspirant by some yoga masters.

c-Laya-yoga (Yoga of Dissolution): Some identify this system with Hath-yoga. It is based on certain ancient philological notions.

d-Bhakti-yoga (Yoga of Devotion): Bhakti means devotion. It is practiced with extreme love and devotion for a certain being representing God.

c-Karma-yoga (Yoga of Actions): It is the way of action, of using one's every day life, one's trade, or an athletic discipline as your way of yoga, and as your way of discovering who you are.⁹

The Poem

Sur Ramkali is a continuum of the Sur Khahori. It begins with description of ascetic yogis in their trek on the track of salvation and their ultimate union with God (one of the meanings of yoga is union). They have put their bodies through

⁹ Alan Watts

rigorous hardships and completely annihilated their ego. All the time they yearn for union with their Beloved and suffer constant pain of separation. Giving human touch Shah has interwoven the poem with human emotions of love, separation, ecstasy, hope and despair.

The poem opens with lamentations of a young girl, who is in love with the yogis. It is she who describes them and we see them through her tender and deep feelings. In many verses she repeats a line or two at the end of every stanza:

I cannot live without them.

Or

Let us go and see their abodes.

There are different images of ascetics. Some are all light and radiate light, and some are fire:

*Some yogis in this world are light and some are fire,
Those who radiate light, I will not live without them.*

*Some have twisted and incised their ears, girded up their
loin, their bodies are smeared with ashes, their bed is
dust:*

*

*Kanpat and Kapri yogis with twisted, incised, bent and
pierced ears,
Kindle fire after reaching their destination,
Dust is their sleeping cot; let us go and see their abodes.*

*

*Kanpat and Kapri with incised ears, have girded up their
loins,
Lateef says, these Lahutis are never lured by worldly
possession,
Those who live in this condition; let us go and see their
abodes.*

*

Kanpat and Kapri ¹⁰ Yogis who incise ears,

¹⁰ Names of the sect

***Lateef says: Lahutees change not their goal,
Those who completely consume their self, let us go and see
their abodes,***

Some of these yogis are in constant pain of beloved's separation and are aching all over with the wound of love and are restless:

***Sanyasis¹¹ are in some constant pain and are restless,
Wound of love of the Imperceptible aches all the time,
They who roam about day and night, let us go and see
their abodes,***

*

***Sanyasis are in some pain, they are restless,
They are wounded inside, but
tell not others,
Those whose hearts are broken, let us go and their abodes,***

They stay for some time at a place, build huts of reeds, collect straw and firewood, light fire, sit around it and meditate. After sometime they put out the fire and, blowing their conshells, proceed on their new journey. The narrator girl yearns for their company, weeps, cries and entreats them not to leave her but they have renounced the world, gone beyond themselves, have severed all worldly relation, and disregarding her entreaties, move on. Thus a dramatic conflicting emotional situation develops. They have abandoned their huts and have gone away, and where there was hustle bustle, reverberating sounds of their chants, sessions, and where fire blazed, there is now a mournful silence, dry leaves and straw are scattered here and there. Seeing all this she laments.

***Today the sound of seekers is not heard at their abodes,
They went away, sight of their empty abodes is killing me,
The Lahutis, who were source of my life, have departed.***

*

¹¹ Kapris always tremble for fear of the Lord,

*Today there are no withered leaves and straw in their
sitting places,
The nomads went away, ash is spread here and there,
Blowing their conshells they went away.*

*

*Today they are not there who wept bitterly,
They, the restless nomad yogis, who were beauty of
shrines, are not here,
They closed the shrine doors, silence prevails, and sound
of conshells is not heard.*

*

*No smoke, no mist and no fluttering candles in their
sitting places,
They went away captivating my heart with their honey-
like sweet words,
I shed tears like dewdrops in their memory, all this kills
me, mother!*

Constant fasting and starvation has made the yogis lean, pale and haggard. Despite that there is some celestial exquisiteness glowing on their faces and the glow is such that though the narrating girl is sitting beside them, is unable to perceive their beauty:

*I sit beside them, look at them, but cannot perceive them,
Their beauty is such that there is no one as beautiful,
I see but still cannot see them, I will not live without
them.*

*

*I search them, I seek their fragrance but the ascetics are
gone,
What a company they were, I will not live without them.*

The great saint Sufi scholar Sheikh Ali Ibn Usman Al Hujwairi (d.1671) who migrated to India and settled permanently in Lahore and is known among the masses as Hazrat Data Ganj Bukhsh, describes three categories of Sufis or seekers of the truth in his book *Kashfal Mahjub*:

- 1- Sufi, Sahab-e-wsul: He is a man of union, he is the one who is lost in God.
- 2- The Muthasawwaf- Sahab-e-Usul: He is a man of principle, who is desirous of becoming a Sufi through mortifications.
- 2- Musthaswaf-Sahab-e-Fuzul: He is the one, who pretends to be Sufi for worldly gains.

We meet ascetics of all the three categories in Shah's poem.

Walter Stace, a scholar of mysticism, is of the view that mysticism appears in two forms: Extrovertive and Introvertive. Extrovertive mysticism is an experience of nature's unity and of one's identity with it, whereas Introvertive mysticism is an experience of undifferentiated unity that is devoid of concepts and images; it appears to be identical with what others have called "pure consciousness"-a state in which one is conscious but conscious of nothing.

R. C. Zaehner, however, says: Stace's typology ignores love mysticism in India and the West. There are two types of introvertive mysticism, monistic (pure consciousness) and theistic. The later is a form of mutual love that unites God and the mystic in an experience without images and with very little, if any, conceptual content.

Steven Kurtz holds that mystic experiences are largely shaped by mystic's own tradition. This has two consequences. First, there are no "pure" or "unmediated" mystical experiences and, second, there are as many types of mystical experiences as there are traditions. William Wainwright says that mystical experiences are presumptively valid because they are significantly similar to sense experiences. Both experiences have what George Berkeley called "outness"-the subject has the impression of being immediately presented with something transcending his or her own consciousness.

We find both extrovertive and introvertive mysticism in Shah Lateef's poetry, and his mystic experiences are of Sufi and Vedanta tradition. He was follower of the great Wahdatal Wujoodi philosopher and Sufi, Ibn 'Arabi but he had remained three years in the company of Hindu yogis and learnt their

mystic thought and experiences. Hence, in his poetry, particularly in this poem, Hindu Vedanta philosophy and Muslim Sufism are so blended that it is difficult to separate one from the other. It is also difficult to differentiate between Hindu and Muslim ascetics. In Hindu tradition of mysticism god Siva is the lord of ascetics and in Sufi tradition Ali, the fourth Caliph is leader of mostly all the Sufi orders. Thus we see both Muslim and Hindu ascetics together on the path of salvation:

*The Nangas left Hinglaj and set out for Nani,
These Mahesis¹² visited Dwarka¹³, with immense
happiness,
Whose leader is Ali; I will not live without them.*

These ascetics hear Muslims prayer call that had been sounded even before the advent of Islam. They are free of all impurities and ultimately join their true guru:

*Having girded up their loin, they need not ablution any
more,
They heard the prayer call sounded before Islam,
Leaving all worldly affairs, they joined Gorakhnath.*

Sufis are above evil and good, sin and non-sin and faith and creed. Sufi's God is neither Muslim nor non-Muslim or pagan. His God is Love and Sufi's religion is love. Abn Arabi did not believe in the existence of evil. To him it is subjective and not an objective reality. In the eyes of God, all things must be good. Only man's ignorance calls some of them good and some bad. "Even such evil manifestations as lying, disorder, ugliness, sinful actions, merely denote the absence of positive quality, the presence of which would deprive them of their evilness." They transcend all barriers of evil and good, faith and creed; they are consumed in love of their Beloved. According to Vedanta, God is love and can be realized with love. He is manifested in every

¹² Sacred place of Hidus.

¹³ followers of god Siva

object hence every object is an object of love. Ibn Arabi also believed that God, whom he called Al-Haqq (the Truth), is love and true worship of God does not imply verbal invocation of the Divine name, not even the heart's concentration on God. To him true worship means contemplating God lovingly in all His aspects-from the most spiritual to the most material, in short, in everything that exists including the contemplator himself.' Love is fundamental factor underlying all Divine manifestations, it is the supreme purpose of existence. Shah says:

*Consumed by love they are burnt all over,
Evil and good are one and same for them,
All the time they shed tears of blood,
How can you ask their faith and creed?*

*

*What for yogis adopt this way,
They are not bothered about hell and care not for paradise,
Neither they are concerned with infidels nor with Islam,
Standing upright they say, accept us o Beloved!*

*

*For a Nanga the ultimate end of every thing is love,
Those, who carry sandalwood, I will not live without them.*

*

*The Babus became beggars; they are not at their abodes,
They are all the time absorbed in love,
My heart, be one with them, I will not live without them.*

In Vedanta philosophy, Brahma is Self, the individual self and the universal Self. Individual self is also Atman. In psychology, self is often used for that set of attributes that a person attaches to himself or herself most firmly. The term identity is also used in this sense. One's gender, profession or nationality is also considered, as part of one's self or one's identity. Commonly self is considered just the person and that a person is a physical system. But in Sufi and Vedanta literature self has different connotations. According to Vedanta, individual is not 'a skin-encapsulated ego,' some kind of spiritual essence, imprisoned inside a body, but he is part of the whole and that

whole is Brahma.¹⁴ In the early stage of development of Hindu philosophy, Brahman meant prayer or speech from the root bra (to burst forth or to grow). Gradually it came to signify the ground of the universe or source of all existence, that which has burst forth into universe or that from which universe has grown. And Atman, at first meant breath and then it came to be the expression for the soul or self of a living being especially of man. And the two, Atman and Brahma, are one and the same. Both are the same reality, within and without. The imperishable is the support and the principle that lies behind all things, cosmic as well individual, the principle, which these things do not know but which controls them from within, is the inner ruler; and this ruler is ones own immortal self. He, who is dwelling in all things and yet is other than all things, whom all things do not know, whose body all things are, who controls all things within-He is yourself. The inner ruler, the immortal.¹⁵

In Sufi ideology also there is no duality of creator and the creation and the entire universe is God's manifestation. To Ibn Arabi the ultimate reality is Al-Haqq, the Truth. And whatever exists in the universe, animate or inanimate, is manifestation of Al-Haqq. Ibn Arabi maintains that there is nothing but God. It is He who manifests Himself in infinity of forms; He is essence of all things. All things are Khalq, but they have no reality in terms of their subsistence as opposed to essence. There is only one reality and that is Al-Haqq. It is in this perspective that Shah says that the yogis, who are aware of this, do not exist as separate entity; one should annihilate his self as a separate entity. There is no separate self all is the Absolute:

*Yogis are not alive; you too should cease to live after
adopting ascetic way of life,
O naïve, hear this message with your inner ears,
Annihilate your self, be away from yourself,
There is no separate self, how can you say "I".*

*

No coverlet, no ragged quilts, not a rag of a loin cloth,

¹⁴ Alan Watts

¹⁵ Alan Watts

*In whatever direction they take step, they find their Lord
in front of them.*

*

*No coverlet, no ragged quilt, not a rag of a lion cloth,
In whatever direction they rush they find their Lord in
front of them*

*

*No coverlet, no ragged quilts, not a rag of a loin cloth,
Those whose huts are empty of all possessions, Lord is in
their front.*

According to Vedanta, the average human being, immersed in his sense life, treats it 'be-all and the end-all of existence' and has delusive sense of his own existence. He thinks that he has an independent self but then Guru, the teacher, awakens him from the stagnation of sense life to the reality that he has no individual self but he is the Absolute and the whole (kul). Buddha was called Buddha because he had awakened to new reality, and having awakened he gave a call to all human beings to wake up:

*"Let the awakened ones hear this;
They, who are asleep, let them awake.
There is no fear for the awakened."*

In Sanskrit language, Buddha means the awakened from a root, buddh, which means to awaken. With the awakening from the illusion that one is an independent soul one undergoes a radical change of consciousness with regard to his own existence and becomes the universal Self, the Brahma. This awareness is achieved through Guru because there are many pitfalls in the path of salvation and self-redemption. The path to it is not strewn with roses, but with stones and thorns. Like the sharp edge of razor is that path, so say the sages, difficult to tread and hard to cross¹⁶. Shah says:

I was soundly asleep when a sigh woke me up,

¹⁶ The message of the Upanasid-Swami Rangna Thanada

Those who stirred me, I will not live without them,

*

Yogis have lost their individuality and are concerned with the whole,

Those, whose abode is nothingness, I will not live without them.

We also meet Nirgantha Nagas. They carry nothing with them, not even their self. They fasten their girdles round their waist and blowing their conshells proceed on a pilgrimage to the shrine of goddess Nani in Hinglaj. The narrator damsel laments and cries for them but as they are Nirgantha, they do not pay heed to her laments and are dead set on their spiritual sojourn:

*Nangas proceeded to Nani, the humble ones went away,
Sound of their cornshells is not heard early in the morning,*

Those who were here, I will not live without them.

*

Fastening girdles round their waist, the Nangas left for Nani,

Those who go there, I will not live without them.

*

*I am sorry for myself as the Nangas set out for Nani,
Those who went away yesterday, I will not live without them.*

*

*The Nangas went to Nani surreptitiously,
I am unable to stay here without them; I will not live without them.*

Putting their heads on their knees they meditate. Whatever direction they look they find their Lord in front of them and they enter into a new consciousness of all created things and their own being. Being conscious that they are not separate from the Absolute and are manifestation of the Absolute, they enter into Godhead:

*With their head on their folded knees, they are contented,
After the pilgrimage they entered into Godhead.*

*

*. Those, who crossed Lahut, entered into Godhead,
Not even a word they speak about their elevated
condition.*

After arduous exercise the aspirant reaches a stage where he could obtain insight into the cosmic mysteries and gradually "his soul enters realms far beyond the comparatively tawdry heavens where the great gods dwell in light and splendor. Going from dankness to darkness deeper yet, he solves mystery beyond all mysteries; understands, fully and finally, the nature of universe and himself, and he reaches the realm of truth and bliss, beyond birth and death, joy and sorrow, good and evil". In Sufi diction, it is a state of emptiness, the void and the nothingness, and it is there that he discovers God.

*Where there is no sky, not a trace of earth,
Where moon rises not and there is no sign of sun,
It was limit of limitlessness where they left their
footprints,
And envisaged signs and discovered their Nath in nothing.*

With this transcendent knowledge comes another realization ie, he is completely and utterly free. He is conqueror of universe.

average human being, immersed in his sense life, treats it 'be-all and the end-all of existence' and has delusive sense of his own existence. He thinks that he has an independent self but then Guru, the teacher, awakens him from the stagnation of sense life to the reality that he has no individual self but he is the Absolute and the whole (kul). Buddha was called Buddha because he had awakened to new reality, and having awakened he gave a call to all human beings to wake up:

*"Let the awakened ones hear this;
They, who are asleep, let them awake.
There is no fear for the awakened."
Melody of a Weaving Girl
(Sur Kapaiti).*

Shah being people's poet sings to people their miseries, joys, griefs, and his mystic worldview, in their own tone and tenor and uses homespun images representing their daily life. And, as in all other poems, in this poem also he has used female persona to express his spiritual aspirations. The sensibility of the sur is a moral and the tone is of a reformist.

Spinning girl's image is a common that frequently occurs in Sufi poetry. Famous Sufi poet Rumi has also employed it in varied ways. Hindi poetry abounds with this imagery and it is also a favorable image of Sindhi and Punjabi classical poets.

Sufi poets have used the act of spinning to symbolize good deeds, worship of God, and meditation. For a Sufi, meditation is more effective than the dogmatic and formal way of worship. Shah also considers them the best spinners and darlings of the Lord as they get up at dawn and turn around the spinning wheel of their mind:

*Those who turn around spinning wheel of their mind early
in the morning,
Though they don't spin but they are darlings of the lord.*

The main point that the poet stresses now and again in the poem is that the spin girl should not be lazy and should not waste time. Time passes very fast and the spinning girl is not keeping pace with time. She has not spun enough fiber to take to market and get its price and profit. Tomorrow when her mates will wear beautiful dresses made of the fine fiber they had spun, to celebrate Eid she, wearing rags, will be in a discreditable position. She prefers sleep to spinning, shows lethargy and lassitude and does not go near the spinning wheel. How would then she confront the lord without having spun fiber?

*Today too you are dying for rest, and did not spin
yesterday,
Spin-wheel frame damaged and its cords loosened,
Alas for those who did not profit from spinning.*

*

You wasted the days, which were real spinning days,

*Not for a while you neared the spin-wheel,
How would you lift your face before the wondrous lord?*

The second point the poet lays emphasis on is to eschew conceit, self-love, and ego. According to Sufi, ego is one's limited sense of oneself, which hinders him from expanding spiritually. It hides his true self and true nature from him and colors his feelings and thoughts. A false sense of self stands in one's way to knowing one's true self. Sufi calls it 'tyranny of ego' and tries to end this tyranny so that one abides in oneself, in his true nature instead of a false nature concocted by one's ego.

A spinning girl, however proficient, should not be proud of her proficiency because nothing could be said for sure that the fiber she has spun would be accepted in the market. Besides the connoisseur is expert and skilled, he may find faults with it and reject it outright.

*You love yourself and go stray, this annoys the lord,
Wrapping scarf round your neck turn the wheel humbly,
So that you're poor quality fiber is not rejected.*

The spinning girls who spin humbly and, while spinning, have beloved in mind and are spinning from devotion to the beloved, their fiber, though rough and coarse, is appreciated and accepted and the connoisseur does not even weigh it:

*Whoso spun fine fiber with conceit and vanity,
The connoisseurs did not accept even a thread of their
fiber.*

*

*Whoso spun even rough fiber with love,
The connoisseurs accepted without weighing it.*

The other theme, which recurs frequently in Sufi poetry, is self-abasement as a conventional approach to divine relationship. Shah deploys this theme most effectively in every poem:

*When examined and weighed the fiber, there were many
defects in it,*

*Calling the spin girls the connoisseurs enquired secretly
the reason,*

*“I am uncouth and coarse, I could not unfold knots,” was
my reply.*

Shah’s mysticism is devotional and he believes in salvation through love and intuitive knowledge. God favors the devotee who is in relationship of love with Him. God even breaks laws of nature to help such a devotee. Hence relationship of love with God is above all the ways of salvation like religious practices and duties. Shah’s devotional mysticism aims at heart, not at reason. His poetry can be appreciated only when one is quit familiar with mystic poetic tradition and its symbolism. Without this one cannot comprehend as to why an expert spinning girl should not take pride in her expertise and why her pride should annoy the connoisseur and consequent upon that, he rejects her fiber. He also tends to ask why a spinning girl, who has not learnt spinning and spins rough fiber, and her fiber is also small in quantity be, in comparison to the expert one, favorite of the connoisseur and he accepts her fiber without weighing it. This biased and partial attitude of connoisseur obviously baffles the expert spinning girls:

*The one, who has not learnt spinning fine fiber, may spin
rough,*

*Her yarn was considered fine and was weighed,
Though rough and small in quantity, she was favored.*

*

*Those who spun yesterday are baffled to see,
Those, who have no cord, are happy with connoisseurs.*

It is a mystic approach to divine relationship. With devotional practices (spinning) one can attain salvation i.e. a perfect and eternal relation with God. But it can be attained only by the grace of the Connoisseur, as well as devotion, moral perfection (spinning fine fiber) and the knowledge that the Connoisseur does not like conceit, self-love and pride. Even Hindu mystics, who believe in the role of Karma (deeds) for achieving salvation, believe that independence from God is

illusory. Man can play certain role for salvation through religious practices, rituals and moral obligations. But there is no room for personal merit. Shah stressing this view says:

*Spindle is crooked, threads are twisted, how I spin?
How much loan I get against the fiber that I spin in this
condition,
If lord favors me I will look beautiful among my mates.*

Melody of the East (*Sur Poorab*)

The word Poorab literally means the east. Nothing can be said with any certainty why this poem is so captioned. I can think of only two reasons. One is that there might be some place of pilgrimage in the east and the poem is named because of that place of pilgrimage situated in the eastern direction. The second is that it is named after a popular classical raga Poorbi and with passage of time the letter 'T' dropped and its colloquial name became Poorab. This second probability sounds more convincing because Poorbi raga is very popular among the Sufi saints and they prefer to listen devotional poetry in raga Poorbi. I have quoted somewhere a saying of the great Sufi Saint Nizamuddin Aoulia that on the day of covenant he had heard the call of God in Poorbi raga. Shah, being a great musicologist, was aware of the spiritual sensibility of Poorbi raga, hence the title.

The poem has two parts. The first express spinning girl's feelings, and the second pertains to ascetics, who blowing their conshells are proceeding to eastward for pilgrimage. Here also ascetic's description is blended with human emotions of love, craving and grief of a female, who is in love with the ascetics. Unlike Shah's other melodies this poem is purely a love poem and does not contain any mystic symbolism. It is only in the last stanza of the poem that the poet assumes the favorite role of his age, which is that of a teacher and a reformer and tells the spinning girl:

*Never make crow your messenger as it feeds on carrion,
Will he think of his stomach or go to friend's door?*

One who can only caw conveying message is not for him.

Like all branches of literature and art, poetry goes a long way in reflecting the dreams, aspiration, religiosity and spirituality, worldview, culture and overall life of the people of the land the poetry burgeons from. And Shah's poetry is a panorama of the people's soul living in, to use Shelly's phrase, 'valley of tears' called Sindh.

In this poem we glimpse only one aspect of a village girl's self i.e. the loving self. In an agrarian society women work at home and in fields also, and after finishing domestic work they gather at a particular place called Aatan, that could be in home or outside the home, a sort of community center where they card cotton and spin fiber. As cotton is produced in abundance in Sindh hence spinning was a flourishing home industry. While spinning the girls chitchatted about their day-to-day life, domestic problems, unfriendly treatment of their mothers in law and many similar topics concerning their daily life. It usually happened that their husbands went out of village to some place for earning livelihood. The villages were not properly linked and wild jungles, ravines and nullas, formed the natural boundaries of the villages. Communication and traveling was by narrow paths and uneven tracks through the woods. Hence traveling was considered hazardous and when some villager traveled even to the adjacent village the parting was in tears and prayers. The housewives had no amusement except their husbands' company; when he went away they missed him terribly and yearned for his company. As there was no medium of communication, crow was considered messenger. Women sent messages to their beloved through crow and gave vent to their feelings by talking to a crow thinking that the bird will tell all to the beloved. There were many omens attached to crow. If he perched on wall of the hut or a tree branch it was thought that he was giving tidings of their beloved's coming. Poets and bards have given vent to their cravings for beloved's union and grief of separation in persona of the spinning-girl. Shah has also expressed feelings of love, separation and expected union of the beloved through a love-smitten girl who is spinning in Aatan

along with her mates. The crow said something from the tree branch,

*The crow said something from the tree branch,
Last night he conveyed beloved's greeting, mates,
No one may please spin so that I hear his cawing well.*

*

*Cawing loudly crows settle down on tree,
They convey beloved's message from top of the tree,
The crows from the beloved's land never lie.*

*

*The crow of beloved's land never lie,
The flier takes and brings messages,
And thus, says Lateef, he relieves me of all anxieties.*

*

*O My beloved's crow, come, say something pleasant,
You smell of spring's fragrance, and have a maund of
musk,
On your way to me cross beloved's courtyard,
So that seeing you my body may be relieved of all anguish.*

Crow is personified and he behaves like a human being. When he brings happy messages he is jubilant and jumps from tree branch to ridge, and when he has no good news he is unhappy:

*What happened, why are you lying on the ground, o crow?
You, who could not bear sun a bit, have born it daylong,
See you thus the crows gathered and made a racket.*

Despite the crow's tidings of the beloved's arrival the beloved does not come and the damsel is disappointed with the crow:

*O crow, as a trusty liaison between me and my beloved
you have not remained so,
You did not convey to the beloved in clear voice,
You do not go all the way but bring in halfway.*

Melody of Peacock, Swan and Cobra (*Sur Karayal*)

In the age Shah lived poetry was thought to have something in it of the divine that enabled poets to say things, which no ordinary person could say and was beyond rational powers. The reason for such notion was that many of the scriptures were in verses hence poetry was divine and poets were, in their own way, apostles. The main object of poetry, therefore, was to instruct, reform, and guide to good and pious life and elevate human beings to their spiritual heights. As poetry came from outside and was of divine origin its function should be to teach and reform. It was not function of poetry but of every literary genre, whatsoever, to instruct and reform and even purpose of satire was to change the status quo. Such thinking resulted in production of morality and religious literature. Shah belonged to that age and his poetry is, besides spiritual, didactic.

While going through the whole of Shah's poetic collection one feels that Shah has image of an ideal man in his mind and all characters of his poetry portray different characteristics and aspects of that ideal man. He is munificent, brave, selfless and lives and dies for others. In female persona she is emblem of love for land, chastity, collective living, and courage. Her determination is unshakable like rock and she, though delicate like rose petals, traverses mountains. None of them is elemental man but all are manifestation of his ideal. They are more of values, concepts and ideals than human beings but at the same time they all are living and pulsating individuals. Besides human characters Shah ascribes human characteristic to things

like rivers, mountains, trees, birds and animals. He describes all their good points and expects human beings to possess them. In this poem Shah has selected peacock, swan and cobra, and describes their characteristics and expects man to possess all such qualities. Though cobra is a venomous but it has many good qualities and because of these qualities it is worshiped in Hindu religion. One of his qualities is that normally it does not bite without provocation or threat to his life. But when there is threat to his life he attacks. Hence Shah says:

*Rarely a scatter brain would tease a black cobra,
If it bites pointedly the bitten will never turn back,
Either he dies then and there or pines for health*

*

*There are certain cobras, whom even peacocks avoid,
Even if it bites slightly by stealth, peacock runs back with
his flock,
They migrate in flocks when they see them inveterate.*

Shah's ideal man is not a superman but a virtuous man. He is a man who transcends his self and becomes part of the ultimate unity of the universe. And swan stands for that man whereas stork and other water birds, which subsist on fish and live in puddles, represent low creatures. His swan shunning their company ascends to the sky and sings the song of an ultimate unity:

*Saying, "God is unique", the swan flew high in the air,
And crossed the dark, the ordeal of birds.*

*

*Abandoning stork's company, swan flew skywards,
And went to the pond where his beloved is.*

Unlike stork, which subsists on rotten fish, swan picks and lives on pearls and scans the pond, dives deep into the water and picks pearls from the bottom:

*Why don't you delve into the deep where there are pearls?
What have you to do here on the bank?*

*

He has now reached and learnt about the fount,

The bird has found secret lode of pearls in the deep.

***Eyes fixed on the deep, the swan scans the current,
He is looking for the pearls he is used to peck.***

And he is ultimately admitted in Divine Presence and discovers all the secrets of the pond:

***He has now reached and learnt about the fount,
The bird has found secret lode of pearls in the deep.***

There could be another dimension of the interpretation of the symbol swan and stork. Swan could be interpreted as higher self and stork as lower self of a man. And addressing the higher self of man Shah advises him to develop all the qualities of a swan, to keep away from storks and of those who talk in terms of "I" and "We":

***You sit and vacillate, don't be apprehensive,
Give up all deceitful talk,
Do not build near those, who talk in terms of 'I' and 'We',
Be with the true seekers so that you may attain union
with the beloved.***

*

***You sit and vacillate, don't be apprehensive,
Enter the deep crystal clear water and search there,
Do not explore banks, keep off the mire of watersides.***

*

***You sit and vacillate, don't be apprehensive now,
The Lala birds, says Lateef, dislike pure water,
Liberating himself from herons, the swan joined the
beloved.***

One of the best qualities of swan is that he is true in his relations. He does not leave the pond even when it dries up. He picks and eats pebbles:

***Those swans are in beloved's company, who feed on pearls,
They don't stick their beaks in mire to eat fish,
People are not aware of them as they move about with
herons***

*

*Pond has dried since years but footprints of swan are fresh,
How can heron comprehend this?
There is always a trap for swans laid by the hunters:*

*

*Bird is alone in the pond and hunters are fifty,
It floats in betwixt waves, trusting in God.*

*

*Lured by a decoy in river birds flew down,
It was their trusting nature, which had the poor things
caught.*

*

*The decoy that had birds killed has neither breath nor
flesh,
It has a wooden spine with feather of grass,
Poor things were deceived by these very feathers.*

With this concept of ideal man in his mind when he scans his own age to find out such persons he fails and he despairs to see that the ponds are the same but birds are different, all peacocks have passed away and there is no swan left, their place is now occupied by the trashy birds that live in puddles and eat rotten fish. This observation may or may not be true of his age but it is very much true for his homeland now. He was indeed a great seer:

*Reservoirs are the same but birds are different,
The poor birds that swayed and chirped have gone,
The generous ones, whose doors were opened to all, have
gone over to the other bank of Keenjher.*

*

*All peacocks are dead, and not a single swan is left,
The homeland is occupied by the trashy Kanero birds.*

*

*The fragrant reservoir is made dirty by the trashy Kanero
birds,
Being helpless in this situation the swans are migrating to
mountains.*

The next chapter of the poem pertains to cobra. Shah's ideal man is not only a person of swan like qualities but he has all the qualities of cobra also. As said earlier cobra does not bite, it bites only when it comes to his life and liberty and though small in

size he is so venomous that even elephant cannot stand his bite:

*Do not regard young snakes as harmless because they are
born of cobras,
Struck by them even elephant cannot move from where he
stands.*

*

*Do not regard young snakes with scraggy bellies as
harmless. Their bite can make a causality of even the
sturdiest.*

Apparently he describes qualities of the cobras whose holes are in deserts and mountainous places, but in fact he enumerates qualities of people of his own land:

*Those cobras whose habitats are in arid soil, their venom
is genuine,
Their appearance is like that of angels, but their bite is
fatal,
If one gets entangled with them, there is no hope for him.*

*

*Those cobras whose habitats are in arid soil, their venom
is of different type,
Even its spine works, if any one happens to step on it,
Their breed can be recognized from afar,
Is there any one, who can face them in battle?*

And then he elucidates his mystic creed of unity of being:

*Bird and cage are one, so are fount and swan,
When I delved deep in myself to find my own secret,
I found that the hunter, who causes misery, is inside me.*

Shah's mysticism has its own historical and geographical perspective. It is in his poetry that the lost horizons of soul, culture, history and even geography, reappear.

As regards title of the poem it is said that root of the word Karayal is a Sanskrit word Kalapi meaning peacock. It also denotes singing style or a ragni. Some believe that it is name of some indigenous raga, which, with passage of time, has been lost.

Melody of Dawn (*Sur Pirbhati*)

Tradition of Bardic Music in Sindh.

This poem is about the bards who were the lyricists, versifiers, and rhythm setters of the period Shah lived in. They were mostly herdsmen hence called Charans, which means a person who grazes herds. There were other classes of musicians also known as Bhat and Manganhars. They were usually the vassals of some ruler or feudal lord as such, versified his pedigree, as well as factual and fictitious accounts of his and his ancestor's deeds of valor. They also versified the heroic tales of tribal wars and thus composed epics. They as well provided entertainment to public in fairs and festivals and their women sang and danced in marriages. Charans' class was considered respectable and some of them were poet laureates and tribal poets of the tribal heads. People respected them and some of them were even regarded apostles through whom gods and goddesses talked to them.

In Greek mythology Muse was goddess of poetry. It was a literary convention that bard invoked her aid to help him in composing good poetry. Homer, the great blind poet of ancient Greece, was a wandering bard who, during his wanderings, composed epics Iliad and Odyssey, and sang them on lyre. Krishna was keeper of herds. Many Jewish prophets were shepherds. Even symbolically prophets were called shepherd and his followers lambs. Bardic poetry was so popular in Greece that formal competitions were organized among them at national level. Such competitions were also arranged in France and Germany during medieval period. The best of all such

competitions was the National Eisteddfod of Wales, which later degenerated into somewhat casual gatherings in village inns. But in the 19th century it was restored to its original dignity and splendor. As the bards enjoyed status of poet laureates in medieval Europe, they formed a caste, which, it is said, continues to exist even today in Ireland and Scotland.

With advent of industrial culture a new poetic genre, called pastorals, developed, which was connected with lives of shepherds. This poetic mode 'tends to be an idealization of shepherd life, and, by so being, creates an image of peaceful and uncorrupted existence, a kind of pre-lapsarian world.'

Sindh, being the nurturing place of civilization, is very rich in bardic music, poetry, tales and epics. These tales and epics are so popular that even today the singers recite and chant them in village pavilions and mostly all classical Sindhi poets have used these tales as background material for their poetry and interpreted them for communicating social realities and spiritual aspirations of their age. Historically, bard came into prominence in Sindh at the end of Arab reign and commencement of the rule of local tribes Soomra and Samma. It was in the year 1033A.D that the Soomra captured power and established their dynasty. As they were natives, they, patronized Sindhi language and it eventuated in the flowering of native music, literature and culture. The charans' primary task was to compose encomiums in praise of the rulers, versify national events, particularly heroic actions and victories. Later they widened their repertoire and included popular and topical themes. They were not confined to king's court only but they roamed all over the country, singing poems in praise of the rulers and thus popularizing them among the masses. Rulers were also apprehensive of them because when they were annoyed they derided them in their poetry and made them unpopular. In one popular folktale "Sourath Rai Deyach" a fiddle playing bard, having fascinated the king Rai Deyach with his music, demanded king's head in reward and the king oblidged saying:

*If I did not have what you demand
I would have smeared for all eternity
The good name of those who are munificent.*

*

*I would merely sacrifice my head for you,
I really cannot give that what you are worthy of.*

In the course of roaming among the people they picked up popular tunes and refined them and later those tunes elbowed into the fold of the framework of our classical ragas. They also borrowed folktales, versified them, set them to music and spread them all around. They composed long narratives having elements of love, fantasy, improbability, extravagance and naiveté. They sang these tales in particular tunes, which also developed into ragas. For instance, Sohni is a folktale and the tune this tale was sung in, evolved into raga. So is raga Sourath. This gave birth to the tradition of Sur music in Sindh, which, in the whole of sub-continent, is peculiar to Sindh. In Sindhi music the traditional word Sur carries two meanings. One denotes musical note like SA and RE while the other denotes tune or melody in which a particular song is sung. Hence, when we say Sur Sohni it designates a tune set in Sohni raga and when we say Sur Marui it indicates all the three ragas in which this tale is sung i.e. raga Bharveen, Sarang and Mand. Similarly occupational songs are sung in particular surs and melodies and when we say Sur Kapaiti (melody of spinning girl) we mean all the tunes in which that occupational song is sung.

This medieval period of Sindh can aptly be called the era of epic. It was in this era that the great epics of ideal love, munificence and grandeur were composed and sung in the royal courts and village pavilions. Many bardic epics are sung even today in village pavilions as well as in concert halls and are equally appreciated by common folk and the elite. They are the most powerful medium of expression of the contemporary sensibility of Sindh. Even the tunes composed by the bards of tenth century A.D are a la mode in modern times. For example, the tragic and valorous epic of Dodo- Chanesar is sung in the same old stylized manner it was sung centuries ago. It is a long narrative poem, on a grand scale, about the deeds of warriors, a polygonal heroic story incorporating myth, legend and history and people's aspirations expressed in a lofty and grandeur manner. It is sung by a group of six bards, divided in two groups, each group with a leader. One group narrates the tale in

prose, synchronizing it with the beat of drum. He then ends the narration saying: "And the poet says thus." With these words the second group starts beating the drum and singing the versified part of the tale. The singing session of the epic is regarded as mourning session. Before they narrate and sing the epic the bards perform ablution and clothe themselves in black.

In this melody Shah has likened relationship between a bard and his lord to that of God and the devotee. As a minstrel acquires perfection with practice and his perfection pleases and moves his lord so much that the later (Rai Deyach) has no hesitation about rewarding the former (Beejal) with his own head. In the same way the devotee has to be perfect in devotion and worship like a bard playing to please his patron ruler, so as to please God.

Bards get up at dawn to worship God by singing hymns. The devotee should also get up at dawn and worship Him. Shah advises the devotee not to sleep for it is not the way of musicians to dangle their musical instrument by a peg nor do they keep it under pillow and sleep:

*This is not the way of a minstrel to dangle fiddle by a peg,
How is it that you cross with beautiful morning?
Who would call you minstrel when you do not play early
in the morning.*

*

*How can you sleep for whole nights? You ought to pass
your nights weeping,
Tomorrow your fiddle will be lying on ground.*

Shah, being himself a creative writer, has described the artist's creative urge that makes him restless and he is always in search of perfection, but his wanderings are wanderings in wilderness and he is running after mirages:

*Those who have no rest, can be called minstrels
With fiddle on their shoulders they wander in wilderness
to find a path*

As already said Shah has appropriated characters from folktales, history and legends and has set them in a spiritual milieu. In this poem he has symbolized Jam Sappar, ruler of Las Lasbela, and praised his generosity. His real name was Pahar

Khan but he was known among the masses as Sapar Jam and was loved by them for his munificence. Oral tradition has it that once he gave hundred horses in charity to a bard. Shah endorses his munificence:

*Forget all skill, be ignorant naïve, seek alms then,
Last night Sapar had high breed horses kept for you,
The lord of Lasbella blessed those, who do not know
singing.*

*

*O minstrel, remember Sapar in every breath, never forget
him,
Replace strings of your fiddle with those of silver,
Present yourself before him, imploring and entreating.*

Throughout the poem Shah stresses upon the bards to acquire expertise and perfection. But at the same time he tells them that Jam prefers devotion to expertise and perfection and humility to conceit. Hence, he showers favors on those who are naïve, humble, and unskilled so much so that if skilled musicians learn of his favors to unskilled musicians, they will break their musical instrument or refuse to go to the Lord for gifts:

*If those, who excel in the art of music, learn secret
bestowing upon the unskilled,
Will at once smash all their instruments in pieces.*

*At places we feel the smarting of the ego of artist injured
by favors:
Minstrel is not well, distance is long, convey to the
elevated one,
“Whatever you intend to give me, send it here, I will not
come over there”.*

This could be interpreted as resentment of the skilled and gifted musicians against non-recognition of their merit, which amounts to injustice

Melody of the Days Bygone (*Sur Dahar*)

The tale

Lakho Phulani was the son of Jam Phul, the ruler of Kach Bhuj. Jam Phul had married five wives from different strong Rajpoot clans. His one wife was from Rebari clan and Lakho Phullani was born of her. Lakho was young and handsome and very dear to his father. His mother was also a favorite queen of the Jam. This made other queens jealous and they jointly made a plan to degrade Lakho and his mother, in Jam's eyes. One day the royalty celebrated a festival inviting other royal families. It was an occasion for young princes and princesses to choose their spouses, and having chosen the princess the prince was to sprinkle color on her and thus indicate his choice. Lakho saw a young beautiful girl and though her face was partly covered with a scarf, he took fancy with her. She also showed her inclination and passed twice or thrice near him. Lakho sprinkled color on her to indicate his choice. The princess immediately uncovered her face. Lakho was shocked to see that she was the youngest queen of his father. This made Jam furious, as he was insulted in the presence of other royal families. And he, in a frenzy of rage, banished Lakho from his country and his heart.

Lakho, wearing black mourning dress, mounted his horse and left for good.

Lakho was deceived and humiliated and burning for revenge, but as he could not avenge himself on his father and stepmother, he gave vent to his revenge by falling on his father's enemies as well as rajas and tribal heads, who were sucking poor

people's blood and became a bandit. He would now mount his favorite black mare, Lakhi, attack the enemy with his two friends, Jaso and Jasraj on his left and right.

*They are always scrubbing and saddling,
These are signs of Lakho's impending robberies,
preparations for depredations,
Tightening the girth they will cause hue and cry in Kacho.*

*

*Lakho mounted Lakhi, the mare was under him,
He took belles in his protection and girded his loin cloth,
He would have all of them know his wrath in the morning.*

*

*Wake up Jarejas, you too Sammas, sleep not calmly,
Behold, Lakho is committing robberies towards your
region.*

He was unparalleled in valor and generosity. None dared offer resistance to him. Whatever he looted he distributed it all among the poor. Bards and minstrels composed poems for his valor and generosity, which they sang from place to place.

*There are lakhs by the name of Lakho, Phulani is of
singular kind,
Even Ranas and Rais shiver in their castles on hearing his
name,
Jarejas have nightmares about him.*

*

*There were lakhs of Lakhos but Phulani is of singular
kind,
The Oads were freed of all fears after coming under his
protection.*

One day Lakho received the sad news of his father's death. He gave up depredations and returned home. Being the eldest son, he ascended his father's throne, and from a bandit became a kind-hearted, loving and a munificent ruler.

It was Lakho's prime youth and it so happened that he fell in love with a beautiful princess, Maher Rani by name, who was

the daughter of the ruler of Mehrano. The ruler was approached for her hand. The proposal was accepted and Maher Rani was married to Jam Lakho. But Lakho soon discovered that his wife had loved someone else before her marriage and she did not want to marry anyone else but her lover, and that she was still in love with him. On learning this he became out of himself and decided to kill her. But soon he realized that it would not become a king to kill his queen for infidelity and get bad name. Instead he left her for good.

It so happened that he fell in love with a girl of nomad Oad tribe. Oads are masons, they go from place to place, settle down temporarily where ever they get building work. At this time they were building citadel wall around Lakho's palace. Lakho saw the girl and fell in love with her at first sight. He soon married the girl and made her his queen.

*Lakho had undertaken to protect honor of we Oad women,
He will not do otherwise, we are already vulnerable.*

*

*Though an ugly Oad woman, I am your honor,
The huts that we built for shelter under you, I give all of
them in your care.*

*

*Worn out winnows in hands and spades on shoulders,
They get up early in the morning for labor,
Lakha, these poor Oads are migrating.*

Lakho Phullani's maternal uncle Rai Khangar, was also a ruler. He was in love with a woman of a Rebari tribe. She was his concubine. Rebari tribe had some grievances against Samma tribe. They wanted to avenge on Sammas but were afraid of Lakho. However when they learnt that Lakho has given up depredations and was now no more a threat they started terrorist activities against Sammas. They killed Lakho's best companions, Jasso and Jasraj and took shelter with his uncle, Rai Khangar. Lakho asked his uncle to handover the killers but he refused. This encouraged Rebaries and they increased their terrorist activities. It made Lakho furious. He drew his sword, mounted his black mare, Lakhi and attacked Rebaries and killed

many of them. His uncle's concubine wailed, threw dust on her face, and lamented vociferously because her lover, Rai Khanghar could not save her tribe from Lakho's revenge.

*Rebari woman put away calves in pen weeping,
Lakho had taken away all the grown up animals.*

*

*Standing near the hedge the Rebari woman cries,
They took away many of her fine buffaloes.*

*

*Standing near the hedge the Rebari woman cries,
The horsemen, whom I had heard much, are taking away
the herd,
His name inspires fear on both sides of Kachho and all
around.*

*

*The Rebari woman cries and puts away calves in pen,
The lass taunts and curses Khanghar,
There is no grown up in pen, Lakho is busy in looting.*

Rai Khanghar, seeing no way to avenge on Lakho made a plan. He sent a message of peace to Lakho and invited him to his palace. Lakho came on his uncle's invitation and while greeting him Rai killed him with a poisoned dagger.

*It is indeed blessing that Lakho and Lakhi are both dead,
Sisters, Almighty has freed Kachh from fear,
Maidens have it that now Rebarees are safe.*

Introduction

To avoid our likely estrangement from the symbolic meaning of the poem that opens out in vague and endless suggestions, we must get ourselves familiar with the title, allusions and concealed quotations of the poem with which the poet conveys what could not have been conveyed otherwise. As regards title Dahar of the poem, there are two explanation of the term. One is that it means a valley between two dunes. And the other is that it was the name of one local ruler, who ruled major towns of present Thar and Kacch. He also founded a new city in the area of Bulhari on the bank of river Dhoro and that city was

named after him and called Dahar. Even now one can find ruins of that city in Deeplo, a famous city of Thar. One of the descendents of Dahar was Jasodhan Mahrani, who also ruled over a big territory of present district of Badin and Tharparkar. To me the first explanation does not sound correct as we do not find any reference of the valley and it does not correspond, even by implication, with the meaning and symbols of the poem. There are many references in the poem that support my view. For instance there is mention of the river on whose bank ruler Dahar had built the city. There is also mention of Jasodhan, the descendant of Dahar. Scholars tell us that the root of the word Dahar is Daah meaning information and awareness. Hence Daahar means an aware or informed person. Later it changed from Daahar to Dahar.

There are many characters in the poem but they are not strictly historical. Shah was not writing history but composing poetry. Though it is not history in the popular sense of the term, but it is history of 'what might have happened.'

The poem consists of three chapters each having different theme not corresponding to each other. The first section is about the brevity and briefness of life. Since time immemorial poets have been composing mournful reflective poetry about the briefness and brevity of life and the destructive force of time. They lament seeing the ruins of palaces, cities throbbing and pulsating with life, human civilizations, and mighty kings and empires. It is a strange human phenomenon that though man strives for progress he, at the same time, wants to arrest time and maintain the status quo as such, past is always superimposed on his present. Man of every age is dissatisfied with his present and considers past age a golden age. Hence, every age has a golden age of the past, an era when things were at their best. And what is golden age for the people of preset era, also had golden age of its past.

Our poet happened to pass by the ruins of the towns built by Dahar and Jasodhan and the river Dhoro, which had dried by that time. He was moved and reveling in melancholic wistfulness he recreated the past by composing a poem of love, adventure, heroic achievements, chivalry and gallant love. The

first verse of the poem brings before our eyes the desolate scene. The Indus River has changed its course, the channel fade by it has dried. It was source of livelihood to the people of the area. They had been doing trade through the river by boats and it had brought prosperity to the people. There was plenty of fish in the channel and people subsisted on it. But after the drying up of the channel people have migrated to other places and the entire area is desolate. There is only one Kanda tree (meaning prickly plant) and the poet personifying the plant asks it to relate some anecdotes of the days of the past prosperity:

*Tell me Kanda, some anecdotes of the lords of Dhoro,
How were the nights, how were the days then?*

*

*Tell me Kanda, some episodes of the lords of Dhoro,
your condition shows that you are passing hard days.*

Attributing human characteristics to the tree the poet interprets the dropping of its edible pods as a sign of the grief that the tree is feeling for the generous men like Jasodhan, who are no more:

*Kanda, is it true that the dear ones departed from you?
Pods are dropping in bunches from your branches.*

The poet accusing the tree says that the place is desolate, all good people are no more around, the channel on whose bank the tree sprouted and grew, has dried up but the tree is indifferent and callous to all these tragic happening. And it is because the tree does not feel for the days bygone that it is still green and bears fruit:

*Kanda, had you been bereaved for the lords of Dhoro,
Your branches would not have blossomed to bear pods.*

The second chapter contains encomiastic verses about the prophet of Islam. Shah's entire poetry thrives with his love and devotion for the prophet but except at certain places in his other melodies he has not directly expressed it in the way he has done in this melody. He has mostly expressed his devotional love

through symbols of a female character, who longs and yearns for their beloved. It is in this melody that he has directly composed an encomium to express his love for the lord:

*O lord of Madina, hear my humble calls,
Those who are in your protection in midstream, steer them
across.*

*

*O lord of Madina, hear my humble calls,
You are my only mainstay, I can't think of any other.*

*

*Mendicant, go to Medina making feet of your eyes,
Where the pupil's light of Muhammad glitters,
Where the luster of his beauty is a sight for the sore eyes
of his followers,
Make a pilgrimage there is a loving devoutness.*

The third chapter is also expression of poet's love, longing and devotion for his beloved which, as in all other poems, he has expressed in the persona of female folk characters.

Thematically the fourth chapter has two parts. One is about cranes and the other about milkmen, masons, a nomad tribe Qoad, some Rajpoot marshal tribes, and some historical legendry characters. The chapter opens with description of the migrating cranes whose home is in the heights of mountains. They come to plains in winter and as winter ends they fly back to mountains. The poet describes feelings of the cranes in a way as if they were human beings.

They are anxious for their children, whom they have left behind. When they warble, their warbling reminds the poet of his beloved, who has separated from him. To the poet, the best trait of cranes is their collective living. They always fly in flocks and if one is separated from the flock it warbles with grief, and thus the poet highlighting their habit of collective living tells us that they have more love for each other than human beings:

*The cranes fly in flocks they never break bonds of love,
Behold birds, they are more affectionate than humans.*

*

*Crane is accustomed to living with the flock, it pecks not
with others,
Night went by as she called out again and again.*

*

*Cry not crane, be quiet, don't reopen heart's wounds,
How would they stay home who are wounded by
separation?*

*

*Warbling of crane yesterday reminded me of my beloved,
Without whom I am passing miserable days here.*

*

*Cranes are warbling, perhaps they are departing,
They go wailing leaving their young ones behind.*

The poet symbolically warns the crane to be careful of hunter. He not only kills the crane with gun and arrow but also stretches trap and camouflages it with straws and thus scatters many flocks of cranes:

*The crane could not comprehend the arrow that was in
hunter's heart,
Hunter's sudden move separated all from the flock.*

*

*O crane, you perceive not the straw with which the trap is
covered,
Hunter's killing spree has scattered many a flock.*

*

*The hunter has gun in his armpit, and wears shabby
clothes,
Having killed the nobles, he climbs mountain passes.*

*

*May you die hunter, all your trapping devices be
destroyed,
For you separated lovers from each other yesterday.*

Long before the advent of industrial civilization, poets and writers idealized the nomad people living in the lap of mother nature and showed dislike for urbanization. People isolated from urban civilization and living in deserts and wild woods

were preferable to those living in cities and towns. Even Shakespeare in his two plays 'The Winter's Tale' and 'As You like It' 'contrasts the corruption and sophistication of court life with the simpler and healthier life of countryside.' In this melody Shah values lives of the milkmen living away from artificial urban life.

*Keeping herds and living away from each other is not the
way of the herdsmen,
One day they will bring their animals to the isolated
place,
Even if your relatives are strong enough, do not remain
carefree.*

*

*I grieve mother to see the deserted abodes of the herdsmen,
They used to let passersby drink aplenty from their jars,
They departed from among the people when it rained.*

*

*If you want to graze your cattle in rainy season then
migrate along with the herdsmen,
You will never hear cry of loss.*

*

*May the curd be churned in jars and villagers be happy to
entertain passerby guests,
Herdsmen have enlivened the habitation place of the
miserable.*

There are many semi historical-folk characters in the poem but Lakho Phullani is the main character whom Shah has portrayed in a romantic and imaginative style. It is a vision of a medieval man and his role in that society. Despite the fact that he belongs to the epoch bygone and expresses sensibilities of his times, one feels that he is man of our times wearing medieval costumes; he belongs to our age and is manifestation of our ideals of a man and his role in society. As such Lakho is the unfading metaphor of human values and he reveals himself through his extremity.

Melody of Valor and Munificence (*Sur Bilawal*)

Introduction

It appears that to Shah bravery and munificence are very high human values. Through out his poetry he has praised these qualities and eulogized brave and munificent folk and semi-historical characters. In this Sur he has brought in to perspective the past into present and with historical allusions portrayed decay of these values in the life of his times. He has sung praises of brave and munificent semi-historical characters like Rahu, Samo, and Jakharo, who, besides being generous and valiant, possess high sense of honor. Their concept of honor is feudal and medieval. According to them, an honorable man is one, who gives his life to protect the weak, particularly those who come under his protection. In this Sur some royal ladies come under their protection and they sacrifice their lives for them.

Shah has composed this panegyric poem in raga Bilawal, which is a hymnal raga sung at dawn in praise of gods. And Shah's historical characters, though human beings are in fact symbols and he has left it to the reader to interpret these symbols according to his own association of ideas, experience and imagination. Shah has described their deeds of bravery and generosity in images and then has juxtaposed them to make a composite whole.

Let us meet these characters in their social and historical milieu.

Abro Samon was ruler of a big territory in Katchh. He is also known as 'Halar Dhanni' meaning the master of Halar

Range from which it is inferred that he was ruler of Hallar territory. He is second major character of the popular Sindhi national epic 'Dodo Chanesar'. Dodo and Chanesar were brothers. They quarreled over throne. Chanesar being the elder was entitled to ascend the throne but all the chieftains voted for Dodo, who ascended the throne. It enraged Chanesar and finding no other way to get his right he went to Delhi to seek help of Allauddin, the powerful king of Khilji dynasty. He promised the king that in case of his ascension to the throne, he would give large portion of his treasure to him and also marry his beautiful sister Baaghhi to the king. This tempted the king and he accompanied him to Sindh with huge army. Dodo did not want to shed human blood for throne and as such was ready to abdicate but he was not ready to give his sister in marriage to the king. Hence there was a war. King Allauddin had a huge army and Dodo was destined to lose. Imminence of defeat made Dodo send his sister along with other ladies of the palace to Abro Samon for shelter. While on their way to Abro they passed through the territory of Jam Oudher Samon, who was also famous for his generosity and bravery. On learning about the ladies he came forward to greet them and invited them to lunch at his house. This involved risk of Allauddin's annoyance and attack. His mother advised him not to take the risk. To that he replied that it was she who had named him Ouder meaning the coverlet and all his life he had been cover to those who were bare headed and now how could he not be cover to the helpless ladies who are crossing his territory?

*Sammo calls them, who are in big trouble,
When he gets up and mounts the saddle I will be free,
Who is there other than you to bear burden of the refuge-
seekers.*

*

*He bears the burden of refuge-takers, he is the mainstay of
the helpless,
The generous one wavers not seeing lakhs in front,
Where millions are dumb founded there he smiles broadly.*

*

Stirred up he rose and put the armies to howl,

*He steps up to refuge-seekers, smiling. He raises his arm
above his head in offering submission to the King.*

*He brought the ladies home and treated them royally.
While the ladies were in his palace, a general of Alluddin
learned about it and attacked him:*

*Let us praise the one, who is not alarmed in front of
thousands of enemy soldiers,
He weakens not a bit, says Lateef, even when there are
millions,*

*He never steps back but always goes ahead,
The master of Halar Mountain confronts refuge-seeker
with a call.*

*While the battle raged he arranged for the convoy to
proceed secretly to Jam Abro. Then he fought desperately
and died.*

The royal ladies reached Jam Abro who honored them in a way royalty is honored and made his army ready for the expected war. King Alluddin having defeated and killed Dodo along with all the male members of his family advanced on Abro Samon. Abro who besides being brave, was munificent also. Shah has praised him for his munificence:

*Among all the lords Abro is steadfast,
He does not forget the supplicants even for a moment,
The sheltering Jakhro will steer to safety all the needy,
He asks after those, who are feeble and helpless.*

*

*Among all the leaders Abro is like a big shady tree in a
forest,
He traverses the lands which no one has ever trod,
Like a monsoon rain he deluges wastelands.
If any one comes to him even for a few moments the lord
of dunes grants him a thorough bred horse.*

*

*Abro, the high-minded, the large-hearted, magnificent,
Samon of high good qualities, is pride of all,*

All come to his abode, the lord of Kutchh never refuses any one.

*

*Standing in field he calls all his companions,
All these fine men will manage to cross difficult passes
safely.*

The invader asked him to hand over the ladies or to face death. Abro preferred death. This resulted in war and Abro, after demonstrating unparalleled valiance and bravery died for the honor of ladies who had come under his protection.

*Allauddin came and his elephant trumpeted,
The citadels of infidels cracked and collapsed, and people
in Bhujj got frightened
Abro took the shield, sword flashed on the battle field,
Cutlasses truck like lightning, no one could withstand,
Saying, "My Lord, deliver my followers to me" Jam
mounted,
Samo gave sanctuary, making refuge-seekers happy*

*

*It was for their good that he took the Soomra ladies in his
protection,
Those who came under his protection will not pay tax of
any sort.*

*

*Others gave up all those who had come under their
protection but the king of mountain did not,
He protects the unseen ones, how would he hand over the
seen ones,
This noble brave man faced millions of arrows.*

Before dying Jam Abro had handed over ladies to Doonger Rai Samon, asking him not to hand over them to the king. After the Jam's death Rai took the ladies to a very far off marshy place, where no one could reach them. He himself came back to fight. Seeing no one to protect them the ladies entered the marshes one after the other and thus protected their honor.

The poem opens with poet's devotional praise for his religious and spiritual ideal whom he calls a munificent guide and king:

*Believe what the munificent says, he has invited all for a feast,
Rinse your mouth so that he may put food in your mouth.*

In the second verse the poet advises the reader to expel the gang of thieves from the house. The gang of thieves stands for malafide urges and prejudices of humans and if one purges one's heart of these he will strike peace with the king and be rewarded for it:

*Drive the gang of thieves out of your house, make peace with the king,
So that you will daily be rewarded from that door.*

And then Shah conceals his object of praise in the dramatic persona of the poem. The alms they give and the presents they shower on the supplicants are rewards of spiritual elevation:

*O Samma, you wear the crown otherwise there are many turbaned men,
People crowd at your door,
Everyone gets alms according to the capacity of his bowl.*

Musical Interpretation

Biawal is name of a That (frame) as well as a raga. This is a vulgarized form of the word Velaval which again is the distorted form of the word Vila-ulli. It is said that it was a raga of Velava tribe of Tamils, who had migrated from the Indus Valley and had settled in South India. We find first mention of this raga in the musical treatise of 14th century Mano Sollaoa (133AD).

**God commanded clouds to embellish for raining,
Flashing clouds arrived and rained in thundering claps,
Those hoarding for high price wring their hands,
Their hope of making fifteen of five is shattered,
Hoarders and miser profiteers may perish,
Herdsmen are again speaking of great showers,
Sayyad says, they all depend on you o Lord.**

**O lord, bestow prosperity on Sindh for ever,
And shower blessings on the whole world.**

Melody of Clouds (Sur Sarang)



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